

Gay on the Canadian Prairie:

Twenty Years of **P**ERCEPTIONS,

1983-2002



compiled by Alex Spence

Perceptions Publications
Saskatoon, Canada

Gay on the Canadian Prairie: Twenty Years of Perceptions, 1983-2002
Compiled by Alex Spence

© contents copyright 2003 by Perceptions Publications

© compilation copyright 2003 by Alex Spence

The contents of this collection have been drawn from Perceptions newsmagazine. The publishers of Perceptions have generously agreed to permit reproduction of items selected from the newsmagazine for the purpose of assembling this collection. Any issues of copyright are the responsibility of Perceptions Publications, the publisher of Perceptions, and any inquiries in this regard, including any matters pertaining to reproduction in any form, are to be directed to the publisher.

Orders and requests for information about this work should be directed by e-mail to the compiler, who is also acting as primary distributor, as follows:

Alex Spence

E-mail: alex.spence@utoronto.ca

Publisher contact is: Perceptions Publications

P.O. Box 8581

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 6K7

CANADA

e-mail: perceptions@shaw.ca

Cataloguing data:

Gay on the Canadian Prairie: twenty years of Perceptions, 1983-2002 /

compiled by Alex Spence.

Saskatoon, Sask.: Perceptions Publications, 2003.

ca. 400 p.

Reports, news, and opinion pieces about gays and gay life in the three Canadian Prairie provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba, including articles on gay history of the region.

ISBN 0-9734239-0-0

1. Perceptions (Saskatoon, Sask.)
2. Gays – Canada – Prairie Provinces
3. Gays – Saskatchewan
4. Homosexuality – Canada – Prairie Provinces
5. Homosexuality – Saskatchewan

I. Spence, Alex

306.76'6'09712 – dc21

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is for my late Dad, who taught me through quiet and unobtrusive example an acceptance of the wonderful diversity of life.

Thank you to Perceptions Publications and its editor, Gens Hellquist, for their interest in publishing this collection.

A note from the compiler:

What you will find here are the choices of a semi-outsider, the choices of a guy whose roots are on the prairie, but who left a long time ago. The collection reflects very much my own reactions during several hundred hours of poring over, of catching up. And these reactions – well, they took many different turns. I admired perceptive observations; I felt nostalgia for activities in smaller places; I was disappointed and angry at bigotry and stupidity among those who were once my neighbours. But most of all, I was mightily impressed by the dedication of the few who have worked with such perseverance for a better community.

At first, I felt I had no right to make the choices that appear here, and maybe I really don't. But, I was encouraged by my correspondence with Mr. Gens Hellquist, editor of Perceptions. I also began to realize that if I myself found this history and these reports new, intriguing, and valuable, then there were probably others who would as well -- particularly those of us who have long lived in the cocoons of large urban centers, many in Canada somewhere in the three-point charge of YVR/YYZ/YUL.

The collection began as a byproduct of work on an index to Perceptions magazine, an index which covers the fifteen-year period of 1983 through 1997 and which is being completed at the same time as the collection you now hold. It started as a small group of articles that I wished to come back to when the indexing was completed. From there it grew. (The reader who would like to follow up on some of the items in the collection might keep the existence of this index in mind. It would provide an easier way of discovering more articles).

There are roughly 300 items here – news articles, opinion pieces, newsnotes, and a few display advertisements. They are grouped into ten rough-and-ready not necessarily mutually exclusive categories, listed a page or two forward. Browse; read as you wish. Whatever items you choose, I hope you renew, or find for the first time as I did, an appreciation for the many-faceted lesbian and gay (or to be more au courant, the glbtq) life in this particular corner of the world.

Texts are as they originally appeared in Perceptions. They have not been edited. In some few cases of information discrepancy, the index referred to above may be of help.

A small number of British Columbia items (four, by my count), concerning events outside the general geographical area of the collection, have been included because of their interest.

Toronto,
September 22, 2003

Articles have been grouped into the sections listed below.

At the beginning of each individual section, there is a list of articles in that section, with exact Perceptions references [P for Perceptions, followed by issue no., date, and page(s)].

Sections

History

Education / Youth

Rural and Small Town/Small City Life

Hate / Discrimination / Intolerance / Homophobia

Community Health

Politics and Justice

Religion

Celebration

Diversity of Community

A Mixed Bag

HISTORY

The Ritz Remembered	P15 [1985]: 3
Out of the Closet, Into the Archives	P25 [1986]: 20, 22
Our First Valentine Dance	P30 [misnumbered 29][1987]: 3-4, 20
Gay Saskatoon	P31 [1987]: 26-28
Regina Anniversary	P34 (July 22/87): 3-5
Our Past, Our Future	P45 (Nov. 9/88): 22-24, 27
The Prairies	P49 (May 31/89): 5, 18
A Prairie Boy Remembers	P63 (March 6/91): 4-6
Looking Back at 1994	P93 (Dec. 7/94): 8-9
Out of the Closets, Into the Archives	P97 (June 7/95): 11
100 Issues and Still Ticking	P100 (Oct. 25/95): 6-7
A Queer Family Tale	P104 (April 24/96)[dated April 26/96 on contents page]: 6-7
Keeping Our History [Winnipeg]	P113 (June 4/97): 12
No Queer History Here [Red Deer, Alta.]	P115 (Sept. 10/97): 11
Looking Back over 15 Years [about <u>Perceptions</u>]	P119 (March 18/98): 4-5
Chorus Celebrates 10th Season	
[Bridge City Chorus, Saskatoon]	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 22
The Adventures of a Prairie Fag [Saskatoon]	
Part 1 [1950s and 1960s]	P143 (March 14/01): 5-6
Part 2 [1970s]	P144 (April 25/01): 4-5, 10
Part 3 [1980s]	P145 (June 6/01): 4-5, 10
Part 4 [1990s]	P146 (Aug. 1/01): 4-5, 9
Part 5 [comments]	P147 (Sept. 12/01): 4-5
Three Decades of Activism	
[Rainbow Resource Centre, Winnipeg]	P148 (Oct. 24/01): 11
Outlasting Them All [Rainbow Resource Centre	
And Happenings Social Club, Winnipeg]	P149 (Dec. 5/01): 10
30 Years of Activism [Edmonton newsnote]	P150 (Jan. 30/02): 14
End of an Era [Ms. Purdy's Club, Winnipeg]	P155 (Sept. 11/02): 12

THE *Ritz* *Remembered*

A Saskatoon gay landmark has become a part of history. In April the Ritz Hotel was sold to the Royal Bank and closed its doors for the last time. The Apollo Room, in the Ritz, has been a drinking and meeting place for gay people since the early 70's.

In 1971 the small group of people attempting to organize the gay community in Saskatoon decided there was a need for a bar where gay people could drink and know that other gay people would be there. The Apollo Room in the Ritz was chosen as it was one of the few bars in town that was not packed every night.

Prior to the Ritz becoming the gay meeting place in town the Cove, in the King George Hotel, was somewhat popular with gay people. In the late 60's and early 70's Saskatoon had a shortage of bars and the gay crowd soon was crowded out of the King George. The Ritz

became the place to go to have a beer and meet other gay people.

While the decor may not have been the best the hospitality shown to the gay crowd was warm from the beginning. I'm not sure the staff were aware immediately that gay people were taking over the bar but once they recognized us and saw that we did not cause trouble they treated us with respect and warmth. Many times I have been in the Ritz and watched some homophobic trouble-maker attempt to hassle the gay patrons. They soon found themselves on the street. The staff went to great lengths to ensure that we enjoyed ourselves.

With the growth of the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre and the appearance of the commercial gay clubs the gay patrons at the Ritz dwindled. In the mid 70's it was not uncommon to find 50 other gay people drinking in the Apollo Room. Lately the numbers decreased but gay people continued to drink at the Ritz until its closing. Saskatoon's gay community owes the staff and management of the Ritz a warm thank you for providing a safe haven and a place where we were always welcome.

Gens Hellquist

Out of the Closet, Into the Archives



This past month the Saskatchewan Archives Board received by gift a large two part collection relating to the history of homosexuality in Saskatchewan and across Canada. The donor was a Saskatoon resident motivated by two purposes - 1) to better preserve and make available this valuable collection to potential researchers - and 2) to rediscover the use of his bedroom closets as a storage place for clothing.

The first part of the collection consists of 7,000 mounted newspaper clippings, most from Saskatchewan dailies, which relate to homosexuals, homosexuality or the gay liberation movement. The clippings are arranged chronologically and span the time period 1966 - 1986. A minority relate specifically to Saskatchewan and give some account of 'gay' events in the province - i.e. the 1978 visit of Anita Bryant to Moose Jaw, Conservative charges of possible homosexuals in the Blakeney NDP cabinet. The majority of the clippings do not deal with local stories but were picked up by Saskatchewan editors from wire

services - i.e. international and national stories, entertainment reviews and personal advice columns. These clippings document the changing representation of homosexuals in the media, and to the extent that the media can be said to shape or reflect public opinion, they give some idea of changing or fixed social attitudes.

The second part of the gift consists of a 5,000 piece collection of printed material documenting the history of 'homosexual' organizations and publications in Canada. It is believed that the collection was the largest such collection in private hands, second in size and scope only to the Canadian Gay Archives in Toronto.

Most of the collection consists of organizational publications - newsletters, pamphlets, flyers and posters. Over 250 groups dating from 1962 to 1986 and spanning the country from Victoria to St John's are represented. The collection is strongest in material from Ontario and Western Canada and features a virtually complete record of the many groups that have figured in Saskatoon's eventful gay history - i.e. the Zodiac Friendship Society, the Gay Community Centre, the Saskatchewan Gay Coalition etc.

All aspects of our struggle over the past 20 years for greater living space are represented. The collection includes material from political organizations as well as from many groups of a purely social character. There are extensive files on religious organizations, including MCC, across Canada, as well as flyers and posters from bars and baths, and examples of gay male erotica produced in Canada. Lesbianism is represented in the

(continued on page 22)

(continued from page 20)

files of various mixed groups, as well as in the papers of lesbian organizations such as LOOT (Toronto) and in runs of several feminist periodicals which have a distinct lesbian feel.

The collection contains many treasures - including a complete set of ASK Newsletter (1964-1968), the publication of the first homosexual rights group in Canada, Vancouver's Association for Social Knowledge. Also intriguing and rare are early physique magazines produced in Montreal and Toronto for a discrete gay market.

The collection will be housed at the Saskatoon office of the Saskatchewan Archives. Any member of the public now has access to the clipping file. The semi-private nature of some of the early social club newsletters has lead the donor to restrict general public access to this part of the collection for 20 years. However persons with a legitimate community or academic interest in these papers may request permission to use them from either Peter Millard or Neil Richards, Saskatoon.

The Saskatchewan Archives was very happy to receive this collection, which will be an important resource for those in the future wishing to understand our lives. It is hoped that additional materials can be added to this collection - including the records of defunct organizations and files of personal correspondence from 'everyday gays and lesbians'. Only then can we hope to preserve a complete story of our lives. The Archives staff is particularly conscious of the need for discretion and guarantees of confidential

ity in the acquisition and use of material relating to homosexuality and can offer donors legal contracts restricting access to files or closing them completely for long periods.

If you or someone you know has material of interest - reminiscences, letters of love or friendship, letters to parents, photographs or scrapbooks - please consider their potential importance in telling our story and contact Neil Richards at 966 - 5996.



VALENTINE GREETINGS

Our First Valentine Dance

Fifteen years ago this February, Saskatoon's gay community received an early Valentine's present in the form of a dance. That dance, held February 11, 1972, was the first organized dance for lesbians and gay men held in Saskatoon and, indeed, in Saskatchewan. Private house parties had been taking place for years and there are stories told about gay house parties going as far back as the 1930's. This was the first time, though, that gay people had organized to hold a dance in a public hall.

There has probably been some sort of gay community in Saskatoon since the first days of settlement. By the early 1970's that community was beginning to grow and become more visible. For a number of years places such as The Cove pub in the King George Hotel, the Harlequin Room in the Bessborough Hotel and the Kiwanis park around the Bessborough had been meeting places for gay men. Lesbians usually had to rely on curling rinks and

softball diamonds to meet. Rarely did gay men and women cross paths. Coming out and meeting other gay people was usually a difficult task.

That first dance culminated a year of dreaming and planning. News of things such as The Stonewall Riots in New York and the growth of gay liberation groups did manage to reach even Saskatoon. Underground newspapers, such as Vancouver's Georgia Straight, were available in Saskatoon and carried news of gay people organizing in other larger cities. Some people began to think about the possibility of something happening in Saskatoon. In early 1970 two men placed an announcement in the Georgia Straight's community listings announcing Saskatoon Gay Liberation, PO Box 3043, Saskatoon. Initially response was slow and it was three months before the first letter showed up in the post office box. That letter was from a lesbian, the first gay that the original two gay men had met in

Saskatoon. A meeting was arranged and she joined the small group. Slowly more responses came in from the ad. One was from a student at the U of S wanting to come out. He too joined the group and became one of the founders. Later he moved to Toronto and became one of Ontario's most vocal and tireless workers in their successful fight for human rights protection for gay men and women. By the fall of that year there was a small nucleus of people committed to getting a gay group started in Saskatoon.

The next step was to determine how many people would be willing to become involved in such a group. Homosexuality was rarely talked about and many people feared public recognition. A questionnaire was drafted asking if people would be willing to support a gay organization and attend functions. Little black books were scoured for names and addresses to send the questionnaires to. A number of questionnaires were returned indicating that there were other people who felt that it was time for a gay group in Saskatoon. Another letter was sent out announcing a meeting to discuss the idea. No one was exactly sure what it would be but they knew they wanted something to make gay life easier in Saskatoon. Some had been to private gay clubs in Calgary and Edmonton which had started in 1969 and 1970. Others had read about gay liberation groups that were starting up in many large North American cities. Everyone agreed that something was needed.

The idea of organizing a gay club had taken seed. The idea was talked about in the park and the bars. Many people thought the idea was crazy. There weren't enough gay people in Saskatoon and even if there were they wouldn't come out to support a club. Others liked the idea and agreed to become involved. Some of the men even knew some gay women who

might be interested. Another letter was sent out to people on the growing mailing list announcing a meeting to discuss the idea and appoint an executive to come up with plans for a gay club. The meeting also decided to hold private house parties regularly and to charge admission to raise money for the club. Over the next while a number of house parties were held at a cabin at Blackstrap Lake and a house on 11th Street. The parties became look-for events as they provided a way for people to meet. Each party would see new people showing up.

The bylaws and plans were ready and a meeting was called for January of 1972. A number of people showed up and elected the first Board of Directors (five men and two women). They also agreed on the name The Zodiac Friendship Society for the organization. The new club they were going to begin was to be called the Gemini Club. The Zodiac Friendship Society was later to change its name to Gay Community Centre of Saskatoon.

The first problem to be addressed was where to find the money to finance a club. Dances seemed like the best way to raise money as well as continue the house parties. They were becoming too large to hold in people's homes. They would also be more enjoyable than having to meet in the park in December or in the bars. One member of the board was a Unitarian and had heard that Unitarian Churches in other cities had allowed gay groups to use their facilities. When approached, the local Unitarians also agreed to rent their space to the gay community. The first dance was set for Friday, February 11, 1972. Saturdays were not available because the Unitarians needed the hall clean for Sunday services.

In the days before the dance a few volunteers scurried around town arranging the supplies for the dance. Announcements were mailed out

(continued from page 4)

and people were phoned. A liquor license had to be obtained. Would they give a license to a group that stated in their bylaws that they were for gay people? Someone had to be persuaded to loan their stereo equipment and records had to be collected. Food had to be purchased and prepared.

Some volunteers took Friday off work to get the hall ready. The hall needed to be disguised to look less like a church and more like a gay club. The pews were stacked against the wall leaving the middle open for dancing and mingling. Tables were set up at the rear for a bar and for the food. The white bulbs in the wall fixtures had to be changed with red and blue bulbs. Decorations had to be put up to mask the religious tone of the hall.

As the dance approached, the volunteers waited with anticipation. Would anyone show up? Would the police raid the dance, as happened in other cities? Would the wrong people find out and come to cause trouble? A couple of people volunteered to keep watch out the front door. Slowly people began to show up. There were a few strange faces in the crowd that no one knew. Were they there to cause trouble? Once they had a few drinks they ended up on the dance floor and the worries lessened. Before the night was over 54 gay men and women had signed the admission book. Some of the names were obviously aliases.

Dances continued to be held at the Unitarian Hall until late fall of that year. They were switched to Saturday nights after it was agreed to have the hall clean and the pews back in place for the Sunday service. For a while drop-ins were also held on Wednesday nights. Both activities provided an opportunity for people to come out. The dances fluctuated in attendance between 6 people and a hundred. Finally there was beginning to

be a sense of community. After the Star Phoenix agreed to run an ad in the personal column for "The Zodiac Friendship Society, an organization for gay people," even more people began to come out and the community continued to grow.

In late summer people began to burn out. The number of volunteers, as usual, was small and having to set up for dances, help run them and take everything down and clean up after was becoming tiring. By late fall people had burned out and it was decided that the dances would be suspended until a more permanent home could be found. That new home was moved into in early spring of 1973.

Gens Hellquist

GAY SASKATOON

In 1987, Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community is experiencing slow growth and diversification. Over the past few years a number of small groups have come into existence to meet the needs of specific groups of lesbians and gay men.

Prior to 1971, gay men and lesbians in Saskatoon had few options that would provide them with means to network. Gay men had a couple of basically straight bars and a cruising park while lesbians had to rely on curling rinks and softball diamonds as meeting places. Gay life in Saskatoon was anything but flourishing and meeting other gay people was difficult.

Saskatoon Gay Liberation, the city's first gay organization appeared on the scene in 1971. Its appearance was a response to the growing gay movement across North America and people's frustration about the lack of any real gay community.

Over the next decade that organization, which matured into the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre of Saskatoon, the G/LCCS, was the focal point of most activity in the gay community. A wide variety of activities ranging from social to political occurred out of G/LCCS. In the mid '70s many people in other cities viewed Saskatoon as a good place in which to live and be gay.

In the early '80s the G/LCCS went into decline. A growing debt load forced them out of their premises and without a home base G/LCCS slowly faded away.

A small core of volunteers continued to run dances to pay off the debts, however, and to build up a nest egg for a new home. By the

time the debts were all paid off the remaining board was burned out with no energy left to build up a nest egg.

Some people blamed the opening of the first commercial gay club as the reason for the decline of the centre. It may have been a factor but burnout and apathy were probably stronger reasons for the decline of G/LCCS. By 1980 Saskatoon's lesbian and gay community had grown to substantial size and it was no longer feasible to expect one organization to cater to the needs of the community.

The oldest surviving group is Metamorphosis which celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. Metamorphosis is a yearly celebration held every Thanksgiving weekend. It offers workshops on a variety of topics of interest to the lesbian and gay community, as well as social events such as dances, concerts and suppers. The weekend is topped off with a Thanksgiving Day feast. Gay people from across the prairies attend this event.

Gay and Lesbian Support Services, GLSS, has been in existence since 1981. Their purpose was to operate Gayline to provide a variety of support groups. Gayline continues as a resource for people coming out or wanting information on the local gay community.

Lack of energy saw the falling off of the support groups after the first two years. Signs are appearing that GLSS is beginning to expand again with more people seeing the importance of GLSS.

Recently, a women's group has begun to meet Monday nights at GLSS offices and the Thursday night drop-ins are once again becoming popular. GLSS also runs the community library which was originally offered by G/LCCS.

GLSS helped form a number of other groups which have continued independently. A gay AA group, Live and Let Live, has been operating for three years now. They continue to meet Friday evenings at the GLSS office.

GLSS also provided support in the formation of a gay sports group, the Saskatoon Prairie Athletic Association, or SPAA. SPAA has been offering weekly softball nights during the summers and sent a team to the gay summer games in Vancouver in 1984. A weekly volleyball night is offered during the winter and a team has been sent to the tournament in Calgary for the past three years. This year plans are being made to send a mixed team as well as a women's team to Calgary.

PERCEPTIONS, Saskatoon's gay newspaper, has been publishing since 1983. It originally grew out of newsletters published by G/LCCS and GLSS. It has slowly grown from an eight-page newsletter to a 32-page newspaper with local and national news, entertainment news and articles on a range of topics. Currently PERCEPTIONS is experiencing a low energy level but plans are being made to reorganize to make publishing less stressful for those involved.

One area that has seen significant growth is the formation of three different religious groups for gays. Affirm Saskatchewan, a group for lesbians and gays in the United Church, has been in existence the longest. This year Saskatoon will host the national Affirm conference. A local church of the Metropolitan Community Church has been holding services for the past two years. The latest group is Dignity, for gay Catholics. All three groups are small in number but have been providing a resource for the community.

Last year, AIDS Saskatoon was formed. To date their energy has gone into organizing themselves and building a strong base for

growth. They have provided emotional and financial support to a couple of AIDS patients and have done some educational work in both the gay and non-gay community. They are in the process of applying for a funding grant to allow them to expand their activities.

Saskatoon is home to the University of Saskatchewan and over the past fifteen years there have been a variety of gay organizations on campus. For the past few years, Gays and Lesbians of the U of S, GLUS, has been the campus group and their membership has varied over the years. This year GLUS appears to be the most active group ever. It has planned a full year of activities including socials and a talk with MP Svend Robinson on campus during Sexual Awareness Week.

(continued on page 28)

(continued from page 27)

The one commercial club in Saskatoon, Numbers continues to operate and is open seven evenings a week. Regular community dances have also begun. Last year they were organized every six to eight weeks. They will probably happen more frequently this year, as various community groups have been able to use them to raise money for their projects. A lack of co-ordination between groups has been a small problem, however, and already this year groups have scheduled dances on successive weekends.

The original cruising park along the riverbank by the Bessborough Hotel remains the cruising spot for gay men although it has seen a decline in recent years. The bar in the Senator Hotel has also become a drinking spot for the gay community although it remains basically a non-gay establishment.

1987 should see even more growth and diversification in Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community. Over the years the number of out gay men and lesbians has grown rapidly and has become a large base with a variety of needs. Discussions are being held about the formation of even more community groups and social activities are bound to grow.

Saskatoon remains a good city to live and to be gay in.

--Gens Hellquist

REGINA ANNIVERSARY

On June 27 Regina Gay Community celebrated their 15th Anniversary of operation. Although the organization has undergone a few name changes it has survived to become the longest operating gay organization in Saskatchewan and one of the longest running in the country.

The growth of Regina's gay community has often paralleled the growth of Saskatoon's gay community. Like Saskatoon, Regina began to develop an identifiable gay community after World War II. In the years after the war and before the 1970's gay men in Regina met in places such as the bar in the Hotel Saskatchewan, Victoria Park and a few other places in Regina. During the 1960's house parties became an important means of interacting for gay people in Regina.

In the early 1970's some people began to suggest the formation of an organization which would better meet the needs of gay people in Regina. In the fall of 1971 an ad hoc committee was established to look into starting such a group and to draft a constitution for an organization that would help meet the needs of lesbians and gay men in Regina. In January 1972 a formal meeting was held and a constitution was accepted and Regina's first gay organization was born. The name chosen for the organization was The Odyssey Club. The first task of the new board was to locate premises where the club could hold social functions. In the spring of that year a house at 2242 Smith Street was rented as the home of The Odyssey Club. The summer was spent renovating the house to make it suitable for a club and on September 1, 1972 the grand opening of The Odyssey Club was held.

For the first few years of operation The Odyssey Club was a bring-your-own-bottle club

where members would bring their own liquor, hand it over to the bartender who dispensed drinks to members from their own bottles. In order to convince the liquor authorities that the liquor being served was at a private party the upstairs rooms of the house were rented to a live-in tenant.

In 1975 it was felt that the club needed more stability and that the house they were renting should be purchased. In order to purchase property the group needed to become incorporated and in March 1975 they incorporated under The Societies Act as The Atropos Friendship Society with The Odyssey Club being retained as the name for the social club. By the end of 1975 the new society had finalized arrangements to purchase the house on Smith Street.

In 1977 the winds of gay liberation were blowing into Regina and members of the Society felt it was time for the group to become more open about being a gay group. At a general meeting in August of that year it was agreed to change the name of the Society to Gay Community of Regina (GCR). By that time Regina was a member of the Prairie Gay Coalition which consisted of groups in Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Thunder Bay.

1980 was the next year of major change for the Regina gay community. It was decided that the GCR and gay community had outgrown the premises on Smith Street and that they should secure larger premises. The membership approved the sale of the house at a June 11 meeting and negotiations were entered into to lease new premises on Broad Street.

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

The GCR moved into its new premises at 2060 Broad Street in August of 1980 which was to be their home for the next five years. Originally the club was only open Friday and Saturday nights with special occasion permits being obtained to sell liquor. One night the permits were issued under the name of Regina Gay Community and the other night they were issued under the name of a phantom women's group. The GCR wanted to be open Thursday nights, as well, so a new group, Rumours Social Club, was incorporated in March 1981 to allow for special occasion permits for that night. In March of 1982 the GCR obtained a permanent liquor license negating the need for special occasion permits to sell liquor. Rumours was retained as the name of the social club.

Rumours began opening Monday through Saturdays on March 22, 1982. In August of that year they also began opening Sundays with video nights which continued until 1985 when the club started closing Sundays. The Board had also made a decision in the summer of 1981 to hire a full time manager to oversee the operation of the club in its expanded operation.

Between December 1983 and November 1984 an after hours club called "Den's Garage" was opened in the same building as the club. People could continue to socialize and dance after the club closed at 2:00am. Den's Garage also sold gay oriented merchandise such as poppers, lubricants, greeting cards and magazines.

The lease on Broad Street was due to expire in 1985 and could only be renewed by paying a substantially larger rent. Once again it was decided that the group should purchase their own building. A new holding company, G.C.R. Holdings Inc. was formed to aid in the purchase of premises. On March 13, 1985 a

contract was signed to purchase the club's current premises at 1422 Scarth Street for \$94,500. The Broad Street location held its last function on June 29 and the new premises opened for business on August 17.

Regina has concentrated primarily on the social aspects of the gay community although other gay groups have existed over the years working in other areas. In January 1973 a gay organization was formed on the Regina University campus. The University of Regina Homophile Association existed from 1973 until it ceased to function in 1980 due to lack of interest. In 1987 a new campus group, The Regina Students Homophile Society was born to address the concerns of students, faculty and staff at the U of R.

From the late 1970's until 1983, One Loaf, a support group for gays in the United Church was in operation. It held potluck suppers and socials for its members. In 1984 a chapter of Dignity, for gay Roman Catholics, was formed and is still operating.

Regina's gay community has not always been active on political issues. In late 1978 a group of lesbians and gay men formed a group to work on political issues of concern to the gay community. Gay Regina's purpose was to provide education as well as work in the political arena fighting for gay rights. Gay Regina was disbanded in 1980 after many of the group was elected to the board of GCR and helped bring about changes in that organization.

Regina currently has two organizations for lesbians. The Lesbian Association of Regina was formed in February 1982 and holds monthly potluck suppers as well as publishing a newsletter for lesbians called "Second Wave". The Lavender Social Club, formed in August

1984, functions as a social club for lesbians with monthly women's dances.

In 1984 the board of GCR attempted to form four subordinate organizations to better meet the needs of the gay community in Regina. The Gay Athletic Guild of Regina, The Gay Parents Group of Regina, Gay Religious Group of Regina and Regina Parents, Family and Friends of Gays were the four groups proposed by the board. The Gay Athletic Guild was the only one of the four to get past the idea stage and operated with its own board until it was disbanded in January 1986.

In the spring of 1985 a support group for gay men and lesbians with alcohol problems was formed and continues to operate. A local AIDS information committee was formed in October 1985. In January of 1986 it was incorporated as AIDS Regina Inc. and has recently received a grant of \$58,000 from the federal government to expand its services.

Like Saskatoon, Regina's gay and lesbian community has grown in numbers over the past decade and a half. The continued existence of the GCR has had an important impact on that growth.

Darrel Hockley
Gens Hellquist

OUR PAST OUR FUTURE

Although the gay and lesbian movement has made some solid gains in the past twenty years in Saskatoon and elsewhere, it would be a mistake to stop fighting for our human rights now. So said gay activist Peter Millard, guest speaker at the 10th annual gay celebration, Metamorphosis, held Thanksgiving weekend.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. I get a bit alarmed at the lack of historical perspective, particularly amongst young gay men and lesbians. We need history. If we don't know our past, we'll be off our guard," stated Millard.

Millard reviewed the history of the gay and lesbian movement in and around Saskatoon since 1968. He presented a past, present and future perspective, including areas of progress and regression. Millard noted a net advance over the past two decades.

In 1968, gays fought back in an unprecedented way when the Stonewall Club in New York was attacked by police. This marked a beginning point. Gays began fighting their oppression as a group, just as women, blacks, native Indians and other groups had done. The pattern of self-awareness, rage, anger (the fuel for the movement), and self-assertion ("gay is good") was underway.

To develop the self-awareness necessary for the struggle ahead, it became crucial for gays and lesbians to develop an identity. Gay and lesbian history had been distorted, hidden and denied; the literature of Byron, Walt Whitman and others had been twisted to eliminate any connection with homosexuality.

22

The perception of homosexuals, particularly gay men, was that they did what they wanted. This superficial stereotype represented a partial truth for some gay men whose badge became "a mind-boggling number of contacts (which was) part of their struggle to find an identity". When gay men "discovered" lesbians, the relationship between the two groups provided a heightened understanding of their common goal, which was liberation from discrimination. Thus began a shift from highly individualized coming out processes, which involved making contact with perhaps one other homosexual person in "deepest, darkest secrecy", to a coming out which involved groups of gays and lesbians staring defiantly back at onlookers as they marched down city streets. "Terrifying, exhilarating, evangelical" process that it was, it meant that gays and lesbians didn't suffer alone; they suffered with other people.

The next step for activists was the education of our society through a flood of literature about gay sex, gay parents, "analyses of old analyses of sexuality, denying, rebuffing and giving new information".

Entering the political arena with a view to securing their human rights in legislation contributed to the formation of a group consciousness, a public identity and a feeling of gay pride. This helped to improve the standard of life for some gays in some places, such as San Francisco and Toronto.

In 1971 Gens Hellquist put an ad in the Georgia Strait announcing a new group, Saskatoon Gay Liberation. Saskatoon's gay community grew from that and became a model for gay

communities in other cities the same size as Saskatoon. Links were made with Edmonton, Regina and Calgary clubs, but these affiliations were somewhat "depressing" since the focal points were "the best way to serve beer, how to keep lesbians out", and a nuisance (suicide) call. There was no political consciousness so the call was not seen to represent an urgent need for a crisis line. There was still "a fear of standing out, waking up this dog that was going to bite you". There was also an optimism at that time, a feeling that the process (of coming out as a group and demanding human rights) had begun and would continue until we could live our lives with self respect.

While gays and lesbians lived with this naive belief, the anti-gay forces, primarily fundamentalist Christians and the right wing Church, were rallying. They had the energy and the motivation that led to Moose Jaw, July 1, 1978, and Anita Bryant.

In a ball park called Crescent Park, to an audience of between 1,500 and 2,000 people, with a "Colonel Sanders type on the piano", and 17-year-olds who looked and smelled like "fresh baked bread" on the stage, the Kenneth Campbell Renaissance International propaganda program was on. Bryant was "vulgar, singing with a 3rd rate voice into a microphone", describing the birth of her kids in great detail to the huge audience and "getting off on it".

The presentation that day was a direct attack on feminists, lesbians and gays. "The crudity of their thinking was quite horrifying. It was so wrong and general, hate mongering of a very crude kind." Millard remembers thinking, "My God! It could happen!" "I was really frightened for the first time in my life. Do I learn to handle a machine gun? I felt like a Jew in Nazi Germany."

Even amongst this audience, the half dozen gays who attended that day managed to maintain a public presence. They remained seated while 1,500 right wingers stood up around them. They also passively resisted being swallowed up by the group by blithely walking down an aisle arm in arm.

There were supporters of gays in that audience it turned out, amongst them Barb and Colin Clay. Colin Clay had organized a counter rally in fact, and people went out on a limb in support of gays and lesbians.

The next historical twist was imminent.

AIDS was discovered, and became the justification for extremely religious groups to persecute gay men and lesbians. For the movement, it was "like a sudden drop in temperature". Hate literature was to appear in the Star-Phoenix (Paul Cameron) and through North Battleford's Our Family magazine (Melvin Enchil Lalonde). The lies about the spread of AIDS which were printed in Our Family were later retracted, and even the Salvation Army suspended an officer for spreading this hate literature.

The right wing are not alone in their superficial and uncaring treatment of this problem.

"AIDS can now also be used as a cover for possible persecution by government through the use of quarantine laws." These would be introduced to control people, not AIDS, and would be very damaging in the hands of people like Schmidt and Devine. Quarantine laws have already been passed in British Columbia.

In the way of present day advances, Millard pointed out that the AIDS support system has brought out the best in gay people and has

caused gay men in particular to reexamine their values. Promiscuity as a lifestyle is "shallow and self-isolating. There are other things in relationships besides raw sex." This realization has made gay men closer as they become aware of a range of ways of expressing tenderness.

The present day fights lie in the area of family facism, which is the use of the family for ideological ends. "Of course families are wonderful", but present day propaganda is "a slap in the face to everything different". It is also a blatant oversight, since male heads of families, in some instances, are very damaging to their children.

On the whole, Millard reiterated, there are net gains in the movement since 1968. The meeting itself, the club, dances, and open,

healthy relationships which are now taken for granted by some young gay and lesbian people ...these are local, tangible gains.

Larger scale gains can be seen, too.

Quebec, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and Ontario now have legislative protection for lesbians and gay men. Saskatchewan's New Democratic Party is being cajoled, thus their recent tackling of Schmidt and Devine on their homophobic stands. The University of Saskatchewan, where Millard is Chair of the English Department and past Chair of the Negotiating Committee, now has protection for gay men and lesbians in their collective agreement. Millard also referred to the heroic stand taken by some members of the United Church. "That took guts on their part," he said, referring to their recent ruling allowing gays and lesbians to become ordained ministers.

"The days of marches might be over, but the pressure that began in 1968 has got to continue. If young people relax and assume these gains were easily acquired or were always enjoyed, they will simply be lost. It could go back. It might seem solid, but there is a granite-like resistance. Fear and conservatism could combine causing the right wing to ignore us at best and produce the kind of society they want."

Millard outlined some necessary actions for the preservation of present gains and the construction of further human rights:

1. Co-operate with gay and straight people. Network to get things done.
2. Come out. "Maybe one doesn't need to come out publicly, but we must quietly and proudly tell friends and family who we are. One person coming out makes it

easier for the rest of us. The day I stood up in front of those people (coming out) was one of the best days in my life."

3. Last, but not least, Millard urged activists (gay, lesbian and straight) not to let one thing go by. "When the CBC reports a homosexual murder, write to them and request that the next murder that is heterosexual be called heterosexual. Keep on and on and on. Obscenities like Paul Cameron you can't let go. If he does come back, we could try a citizen's arrest."

-Barb Park

The Prairies

Life on the Canadian prairies was often a lonely and isolating experience for gay men and lesbians prior to the Stonewall Riots. Gay liberation was seldom thought about and rarely discussed. For most gay people the options were either move to Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal, which had larger and somewhat more open gay communities, or survive on the prairies with few outlets to meet and socialize with other gay people. Coming out was a difficult and arduous experience and most people stayed in the closet. Even if they came out there was seldom anything to come out to; what there was for gays was concentrated in the five major prairie cities.

Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary and Edmonton did have small gay communities prior to the events of 1969. There were no gay bars, clubs or organizations. Socializing revolved around the occasional hotel bar where small groups would meet to drink and socialize. Mostly these groups consisted of gay men; lesbians tended to be even more isolated. House parties were another means of socializing but if you didn't know someone in the gay scene you had no way of knowing about the parties. All five cities also had areas where gay men would cruise late at night. For many gay men the parks and other cruising areas were the main means of meeting one another but the winters could be long, cold and lonely.

News of the Stonewall Riots and the ensuing birth of the gay liberation movement was slow in reaching the prairies. The mainstream media did not report on those riots and news filtered into the prairies through alternative publications such as the Georgia

Strait out of Vancouver. News also filtered into the prairies via gay people who had travelled to larger centres in Canada and the United States where the gay and lesbian communities were beginning to organize for gay rights.

An equally important event in 1969 that gave impetus to gay rights on the prairies was changes in Canada's Criminal Code. In 1969 Pierre Trudeau was Justice Minister and the Liberal government

brought in changes to the Code that altered clauses which had made it illegal for men to engage in certain types of sexual activity. Prior to that, it had been illegal to engage in oral or anal intercourse and it was not uncommon for charges to be laid against gay men. These changes in the law gave courage to many gay men.

Calgary was the first prairie city to organize a social outlet for gay men and lesbians. In 1969, Club Carousel opened in Calgary as a social club for lesbians and gay men. The following year Club '70 opened in Edmonton to provide a similar social club for the gay community. In 1971 an ad appeared in the Georgia Strait announcing Saskatoon Gay Liberation which eventually grew into the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre of Saskatoon. Shortly after Saskatoon's start, Regina organized a social club which continues today as Gay Community Regina. In June of 1971 the Mutual Friendship Society appeared in Winnipeg to operate Happenings Social Club which also continues today.

After the birth of the social clubs on the prairies, political and social action groups sprang up in the five major prairie cities. The spark of the Stonewall Riots had reached the prair-

ies and gay men and lesbians began standing up publically demanding equality. In the early years of the 1970's numerous gay/lesbian organizations sprang up. Gay and lesbian phone lines were established to make it easier for gay people to come out and connect with the general gay community. A wide variety of gay and lesbian organizations were created to provide a range of services, support and socialization. The revolution was well on its way.

Today on the prairies, all major cities have a large number of outlets for gay men and lesbians. There are more than a dozen gay bars and clubs in the three prairie provinces. Baths, bookstores and a variety of other businesses cater to the needs of gay and lesbian communities. Nearly a hundred organizations providing a wide variety of support and socialization have sprung up. The revolution has spread to smaller

prairie cities which have begun organizing for gays and lesbians in their area. Much has changed in the twenty years since the Stonewall Riots and life on the prairies for lesbians and gay men has improved dramatically.

STONEWALL CREDITS:

The Prairies - G Hellquist

A PRAIRIE BOY REMEMBERS

Gens Hellquist

1991 marks a special anniversary for me and for the lesbian and gay community in Saskatoon. It's the 20th birthday of the formation of the first gay organization in Saskatoon and the beginning of the lesbian and gay community we know today. For me, it marks 20 years of meeting and working with many wonderful lesbians and gay men to build a community and family that would provide a lonely prairie boy with support, nurturing and caring.

My experiences of growing up gay on the prairies aren't all that different from many others who came of age in the sixties or before. I knew in my early teens that I was gay but I didn't know if there were others in Saskatoon like me. Much of my teen years were spent in lonely fantasies of meeting other men like me, who could understand and share my feelings and thoughts. I knew my family couldn't understand what I was feeling and I knew it would be dangerous to allow those thoughts to slip out to them or to friends at school. I felt alone much of the time and wondered if perhaps I was the only person in Saskatoon who felt the way I felt.

I discovered a few gay novels written by authors like Jay Greene which talked about people who shared my feelings and fantasies about men. I had also discovered physique magazines which pretended not to be directed at homosexuals, but I knew different. Maybe I was the only one in Saskatoon who was gay. Maybe I would have to leave and move to Toronto, Vancouver or Montreal. But then who bought those other copies of the Jay Greene novels or the magazines like Tomorrow's Man or The Young Physique? The novels mentioned how gay men would cruise the streets where they would be picked

up by other men. I spent countless evenings walking the streets in my tightest jeans, but I never got picked up. Where were those other people like me?

I decided, instead of grabbing my copy of Tomorrow's Man I would hang around browsing through the magazine rack to see who came and looked at the physique magazines. I felt self-conscious but someone had to be buying the other copies of the magazines that pictured young men in nothing but bathing suits or posing straps. At last I discovered another guy furtively glancing at the magazines. He picked one up and went to buy it. I grabbed one and followed him to the checkout, my heart in my throat. I followed him out and we met. I wasn't alone. There was at least one other person who was like me. I met two or three men this way but most of them were even less knowledgeable about being gay and the encounters were usually short and one-time.

At last things took a turn while I was checking out the physique magazines at the News Agency. Someone had picked one up and was walking to the cashier. I grabbed a copy, even though I had bought it a few days earlier, and followed him. He left the store and I followed him down 2nd Avenue, alternately stopping to look in store windows. He finally came up to me as I stared blankly into a restaurant window and spoke to me. We talked for a few minutes but he had an appointment to make so he had to leave. I asked him where gay people met and he told me about the park. That evening as dusk was falling I entered the Kiwanis Park beside the Bessborough Hotel. I spotted my new friend from earlier that day and headed towards him. I had a thousand questions and we sat for hours as I grilled him on every-

thing he knew. I watched as other single men came into the park and strolled around, often leaving later in the company of another man. I knew I was no longer alone and that I would spend many more evenings in the park.

Over the next few summers I spent much of my time in the park. At last I was able to sit and talk with other men who shared my feelings and I could meet men who I could act on some of my fantasies with. The park became a home for me as I no longer felt so alone. Unfortunately the park was not a viable place to meet gay men during the winter. Cruising when it is 40 degrees below is not comfortable and certainly not productive. Winter came to be a lonely season with each spring eagerly anticipated. I had discovered that gay men also met at The Cove, a pub in the King George Hotel, but you had to be 21 in those days to get into a drinking establishment. Besides coming from a good Baptist home I had never touched alcohol.

The park was important but I felt that there had to be a better way to be around and meet other gay men. Sure I had met the first man I fell in love with and we had a passionate and crushing two-month affair but the park still had many limitations. By 1970 word had seeped into Saskatoon about the Stonewall Riots in New York the previous year. It was a story that sent a thrill racing through me. Gay men standing together to fight against oppression. Wouldn't it be nice if we could do something like that in Saskatoon? I discovered the Georgia Straight, a Vancouver counter-culture paper in those days, which regularly carried news of gay groups and events in other cities across the continent. Other cities were organizing groups of gay men and wo-

men to form social, political and support groups. Why not start something in Saskatoon?, I began to ask people. "Saskatoon is too small," was the usual response. I made it to Calgary later that year to partake in activities at Club Carousel which had started the previous year. What an experience being in a semi-public place with other gay men and the first lesbians I had met!

I continued to seek out any news I could find about gays and lesbians in other cities and the steps they were taking towards liberation. By early in 1971 I had decided that I would put my energy where my mouth was. I would try and start a group in Saskatoon. Along with Dan Nalbach, a drama professor at the University of Saskatchewan, a post office box was rented and by April a listing was appearing in the Georgia Straight's group listings announcing Saskatoon Gay Liberation, PO Box 3043, Saskatoon, Sask. We sat back and waited for the flood of letters to come in from people wanting a group of gay men and lesbians. The flood never came but a trickle of letters appeared in the PO Box. We answered the letters and made arrangements to meet the writers. Most weren't ready to join a gay group but a few indicated their willingness to help as they, too, felt alone without others to share their feelings and lives with. By the time summer ended that year we had gathered a group of people from the ad, and from other sources, who were willing to put time and energy into creating a gay organization and setting about the task of liberating Saskatoon. In September we called a meeting of all interested people to discuss the formation of some type of gay organization.

The meeting was attended by 12 to 15 people, all men except one brave lesbian. We decided to send out a questionnaire to every gay man and lesbian we could find an

address for and inquire about their interests. The response gave us encouragement as there was a definite interest in some mechanism that would facilitate gay men and lesbians coming out and connecting with one another. Some were still telling us that Saskatoon was too small and it would never work but we were too excited about the endless possibilities to listen. We held another meeting to appoint a committee to set things in motion. We decided to hold house parties and charge admission to raise funds for our venture. We decided that we needed a public place where we could take over as the gay bar and the Apollo Room in the Ritz Hotel was selected. They didn't have much business so might not be offended by a deluge of gays and lesbians. Upwards of 100 people attended some of the parties held in homes or at a cabin at Lake Blackstrap. The Ritz began to develop a regular clientele of lesbians and gay men. Our dream was beginning to take shape and we were excited with our abilities to change the world, or at least make our world a bit better.

Some of us also identified the need for public action around gay issues. After all, if we were going to build this group we would need more people coming out of the closet to make it viable. We formed Saskatoon Gay Action as a political group to raise issues about homosexuality and the oppression we faced. We became active on the university campus as some of us were students or worked on campus.

By the time 1971 ended we were on a roll and excited about getting the new group off the ground. People from across the prairies were showing up at the house parties and numerous people had responded to the listing in the Georgia Straight. Word of mouth had got around that some people were going to start a gay group in Saskatoon and many people were

curious. In January of 1972 we held a formal meeting and elected a board and formally created the Zodiac Friendship Society. I was part of that new executive and ecstatic that my dreams of a community were beginning to come to life.

We decided to take a higher profile; it was risky but we knew we had to reach more people so they could share our excitement. We placed a classified ad in the Star Phoenix which read: Zodiac Friendship Society, an organization for gay men and women. After receiving numerous letters from people who thought gay meant happy, and they were definitely happy, the ad was changed to read "...an organization for homosexual men and women." The paper was hesitant about using the word "homosexual" but we insisted and they gave in.

Our first task as an executive was to locate facilities to hold social functions. The parties were becoming too big and no one had a house large enough to continually host them. We had read that some cities were using the facilities of the Unitarian Church so we made contact with the local Unitarians. They had a small church near Broadway and agreed to rent us their church for Saturday dances as long as we would make sure that everything was clean and set up for Sunday services. They also agreed to support us by charging us 25¢ a person who attended so we were sure not to lose money on the dances.

We selected Feb. 12 as the day of our first dance. We spent the day in anxious anticipation running around getting liquor supplies, food and patching together a sound system from various people's components. We were at the hall in the afternoon, moving the pews out of the centre of the

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

church so we could have a dance floor. We replaced white light bulbs with red and blue ones to try and change the atmosphere from that of a church to that of a gay club.

By nine o'clock we were ready but would anyone show up? Would the police burst in to arrest us? Would gangs descend on us and trash our party? We waited, unsure of what to expect. Slowly, people began to trickle in. We spent much of the evening peering out the door to make sure trouble wasn't lurking. Some thought the car across the street with two men sitting in it was the police. Others wondered about the cars that kept driving around but did not stop. Probably people afraid to take that step and come in but we weren't sure. By the end of the evening we were exhausted from dancing, partying, worrying and meeting new people. Nearly a hundred men and women, many of them

new faces, showed up to celebrate the first gay dance in Saskatoon. We were off and running and I finally had my gay group, the beginning of a community, and family which was to validate my feelings and make me realize that I was not alone and that we are everywhere.

The Zodiac went through many phases after that first dance. We continued holding dances in the Unitarian Church, as well as Wednesday drop-ins, until that fall when we were exhausted from having to set up and tear down a dance hall every week. The dances were halted in October until we were able to locate permanent premises that didn't require the work of setting up every week. That first permanent location would come five months later when we moved into second-floor space on 2nd Avenue. The Zodiac Friendship Society went through two name changes, becoming eventually the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre of Saskatoon and provided a home for gays and lesbians until 1983.

I look back on those days twenty years ago with much fondness. We learned that we could change our world, that we could create something that was ours, something that could take away our feelings of loneliness. They were exciting days that are important to remember. We haven't always had the large and diverse lesbian and gay communities we have today in the larger prairie cities. We still need to be creating our spaces as the society we live in won't willingly give them to us. Many gay men and lesbians living on the prairies still feel alone and that makes me sad because I remember those feelings. I hope we see more people involved in working to create new spaces and options for our community as we still need them. We mustn't become complacent and assume that things have always been as they are and will always be. That isn't the lesson that history teaches us.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

LOOKING BACK AT 1994

by Gens Hellquist

1994 was widely celebrated around the world as the 25th anniversary of lesbian and gay liberation. Communities of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and their friends celebrated the anniversary with a wide variety of events. In New York City 1 million lesbians and gay men marched in a jovial mood through downtown Manhattan as they celebrated the gains that have been made since the Stonewall Riots. Thousands more participated in Gay Games IV and Cultural Festival in New York making it the largest games yet. Huge marches and parades occurred in other cities across North America through June and July with millions more coming out in celebration.

While we celebrated our successes over the past quarter century we continued to win small victories across the country and around the world. 1994 wasn't a year in which major victories were won or major goals accomplished but some changes did occur and seeds were planted that will bring victories in the future.

In Canada we endured another year of promises by the federal government to amend the Bill of Rights to include sexual orientation as a protected grounds. The only difference in the tired promise was it came from a Liberal government and Justice Minister instead of a Conservative regime. I've lost count of the number of federal justice ministers who have committed themselves to protecting us from discrimination. We began the year with

high hopes that Allan Rock would finally be the minister to deliver on the promise first made by Conservative justice minister John Crosbie in 1987. Rock said he hoped to introduce the legislation when Parliament opened in January 1994 but it appears the year will end with no legislation before Parliament. Rock has become embroiled in a feud in his own party about whether they will even protect us when crimes of hate are committed against us.

The battle over censorship by Canada Customs continued throughout the year with shipments to lesbian and gay book-sellers regularly confiscated or held up. Little Sisters, who have been fighting the government over the issue for years, finally got their day in court. In October, Little Sisters' case went to court after being delayed by the government for four years. What was expected to be a four-week case has grown into a ten- to twelve-week case which is still going on at the time of this writing. Customs did announce the day before the case began that they would no longer censor depictions of anal intercourse from entering the country. It's heartening to know that I can now read about something that I have been doing for years without the country falling apart in moral decay.

Another important case that reached the Supreme Court this year was the fight by James Egan and Jack Nesbit of British Columbia. The two men have lived to-

gether as partners for over 40 years and have been battling up the court system for the right to spousal benefits. The case was heard before the Supreme Court this fall although a decision isn't expected until next year. The decision will have significant impact in the fight for equality before the law.

Spousal rights was the major battleground in 1994. In Ontario it appeared that the NDP government would enact legislation to provide spousal benefits for gays and lesbians but the legislation failed to carry when the government allowed a free vote on the bill and a number of NDP backbenchers voted against their own government. Across the country numerous small battles around spousal rights were won as individuals were able to obtain spousal benefits under their work benefit plans. Meanwhile, some activists are questioning whether we should be fighting for benefits that perpetuate the heterosexual model of relationships.

Verbal violence against gays and lesbians appeared to rise in 1994 with more public officials using the family as a shield to hide behind while tossing out the usual abusive and tired myths about our lives. Liberal MP Roseanne Skoke joined with Liberal MP Tom Wappell in attacking the gay and lesbian community in an attempt to prevent sexual orientation from being included in a bill that would increase the penalty for people convicted of hate crimes. Skoke's comments would

have been considered a hate crime if she had of attacked any other minority community in the way she continually attacks the lesbian and gay community. Of course various Reform MPs joined in with Skoke and Wappell in their attacks on any legislation to protect gays and lesbian from discrimination.

Following along with the verbal attacks was an apparent rise in physical bashings directed at gays and lesbians. Few jurisdictions in Canada collect statistics on hate crimes but community activists across the country believe bashings were up in 1994. Most police departments refuse to acknowledge the term gay bashing, they consider it an assault like any other, so collecting accurate statistics becomes very difficult.

The Immigration department appeared to relax their rules about gays and lesbian being allowed into the country. Immigration panels granted refugee status to people who could support claims that they faced persecution in their own country

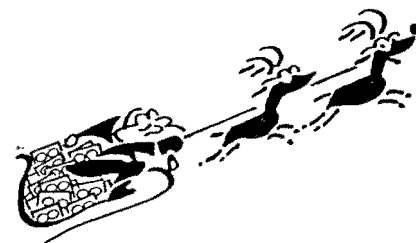
because of their sexual orientation. Long-term partners of lesbians and gay men were also granted immigrant status after years of fighting for such rights.

The gay and lesbian community in the United States appears to be facing difficult times with control of the House of Representatives and Senate going over to the Republicans after the November elections. A number of homophobic politicians, such as Jessie Helms and Newt Gingrich, will assume powerful positions when the Republicans take control in January. With a rising tide of anti-gay and lesbian sentiment in the U.S. Canadian enemies of the lesbian and gay community could become encouraged and increase the ferocity of their attacks.

HIV and AIDS continued to be an issue in our community and we lost many more in 1994 to this malicious epidemic. While science is becoming better at treating the infections brought on by a devastated immune system no cure appears to be on the horizon. We will continue to lose

members of our community for many more years as gay men are still being infected with the virus.

What will 1995 bring? Probably more of the same. Continued gains towards equality as individuals and groups stand up and fight back against cases of discrimination. Who knows, Allan Rock might even live up to the long-standing promise to amend legislation to protect us from discrimination. The struggle will continue on that long road to equality and as we win more battles our enemies will fight back with their vicious lies as they realize that they are losing the battle to force their twisted morality on the rest of us.



OUT OF THE CLOSETS — INTO THE ARCHIVES

(Saskatoon) The Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB) has announced the acquisition and organization of one of Canada's largest privately held collections of Gay and Lesbian materials. The collection, occupying over 14 linear meters, was assembled over the past twenty years by the donor, Neil Richards, a longtime member of Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community.

According to Nadine Small, the SAB's Personal Papers Archivist, the scope and depth of the collection permit the detailed study of Canadian gay and lesbian life and issues since the late '60s. "The collection should be the source of many future term papers and master's theses," said Small, who added that the Archives was happy to receive and preserve this valuable record of the development of the gay and lesbian community in Canada.

At the collection's core are the organizational records of most of the Saskatoon groups which, in the seventies and early

eighties, gave the city's gay/lesbian communities a high local and national profile. These include the papers of the Zodiac Friendship Society (after 1975, the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre of Saskatoon), the Saskatchewan Gay Coalition (1977-1982), Gay and Lesbian Support Services (1981-87) and Metamorphosis, the annual Thanksgiving festival of gay/lesbian pride (1978-1989). These records are supplemented by extensive files of clippings from Canadian newspapers and magazines, and many thousands of newsletters, pamphlets and other printed material from gay and lesbian groups from outside the province. Also included are many vertical file collections, holding information on a multitude of gay/lesbian subjects, posters and banners, and a very large collection of printed gay pornography and erotica.

Small pointed out that the Richards collection is but the largest of several recent acquisitions of gay and lesbian material by Saskatoon archives. In 1993, the SAB received papers from the estate of Doug Wilson, the high profile gay rights campaigner, who began his gay activism in

Saskatoon in the mid-seventies. In 1992, the University of Saskatchewan Archives received a large collection of papers from Professor Peter Millard on his retirement, which detail his many involvements in the gay struggle, and after the 1994 death of former art professor Don McNamee, the University Archives was also able to secure the papers of the Coalition for Human Equality (CHE). CHE, of which McNamee was a prominent member, campaigned for amendments to human rights legislation from 1988 to 1993.

To introduce these and other collections of gay and lesbian interest, the Saskatchewan Archives Board will host a public event at 7:30pm, Wednesday, June 21 in its Reading Room. Staff from the SAB, the University Archives and the University Libraries will describe their large and unique collections and explain how community members can use them and contribute to their growth. The SAB is located on the U of S campus at the northeast corner of the Murray Building, downstairs from the Snelgrove Gallery. For more information call Nadine Small at 933-8321.

Thirteen years ago this May a new publication appeared in the Saskatoon lesbian and gay community. That newsletter called itself *The Gay Times* and was published every two months by Gay & Lesbian Support Services (GLSS) to provide information and news on the local gay and lesbian community. The first issue was primarily a calendar of events and groups sponsored by GLSS and the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre of Saskatoon (G/LCCS). Saskatoon's community was also gearing up for a tenth anniversary celebration of the first ever gay and lesbian dance in the community. The many gays and lesbians who had come out in Saskatoon and left for greener pastures were being encouraged to return to help celebrate the historic anniversary: ten years of lesbian and gay liberation on the prairies.

At the same time that GLSS was publishing *The Gay Times* the G/LCCS was also publishing their own newsletter, *GAZE*. After struggling to get out four issues GLSS decided it made no sense for both them and GLCCS to be publishing separate newsletters. Both groups were finding it increasingly difficult to produce a regular publication as well as keeping other programs operating with scarce resources. Both organizations decided they would support the creation of an independent group that would publish one gay and lesbian paper in Saskatoon. The new publication would be independent from

either organization but was welcome to utilize the few resources each group had.

In hindsight, it was probably a wise decision for the new offspring to be cut loose immediately, as neither group survived. G/LCCS folded not long after when their basement facilities were flooded by a burst pipe and torched by the homophobic building caretaker. Their attendance had also been dwindling as people had gravitated to the new commercial gay club in town. GLSS survived for a few more years but could never put into place sufficient funding to allow them to function effectively and volunteers slowly, or in some cases quickly, burned out.

The new publication appeared in March of 1983 and consisted of three folded and stapled sheets of letter-size paper. The new offspring of the two newsletters called itself *PERCEPTIONS* because that is what the collective wanted the publication to provide: Perceptions of what life on the prairies was like for lesbians and gay men. Perceptions of what was happening in the local, prairie, national and international lesbian and gay community. The editorial in issue number #1 stated, "One of the more important aspects of a vital gay community is an effective means of communicating events within the community. As we don't have much access to the traditional media, it is important for us to develop our own means of communication."

The first issue carried a story on the growing menace of the AIDS epidemic and reported that the Red Cross was recommending that "promiscuous gay men" not give blood. It also heralded the formation of a new gay and lesbian group on the University of Saskatchewan's campus, Gays & Lesbians at the U of S (GLUS). A story extolling the joys of being a Gayline volunteer along with information on activities and groups in the gay and lesbian community provided the rest of the copy in that first issue.

Eight men and four women were part of the volunteer core who toiled to get the first issues out every two months. Twelve

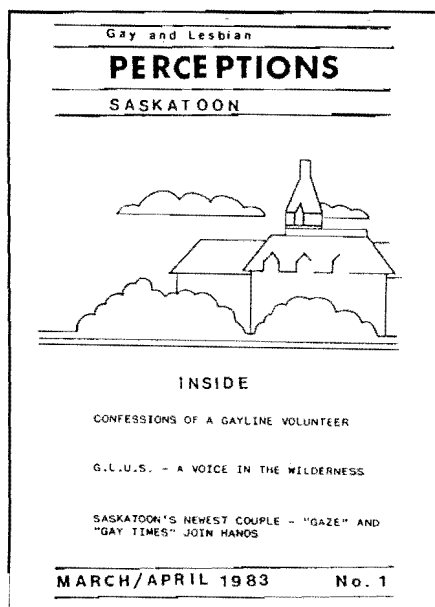
and a half years later, eight of the original twelve have left Saskatoon for other communities. One went on to be one of the key people involved in publishing *Angles* in Vancouver. Two of the original dozen are still involved in the production of *PERCEPTIONS*.

By the second issue the size of the publication had grown to four stapled and folded sheets of legal-size paper and by the fifth issue it had become provincial and was reporting on events in the gay and lesbian communities in Regina and Prince Albert as well as Saskatoon. We continued to publish in that format until the end of 1988, although the number of pages quickly grew to 36 and the number of copies printed necessitated paying a printer to produce the pages. A crew of volunteers has always collated, stapled and folded each copy when the printing was back from the printer. We still are doing that today and the task has become long and arduous considering the large number of copies we are producing today. But it saves us money and money as always been a problem for *PERCEPTIONS* as regular readers will know.

In January of 1989 *PERCEPTIONS* started coming out in basically the same format it appears today. It also became a wider prairies based newsmagazine. At that time there were no other gay and lesbian publications on the prairies and out here in the hinterland we have always felt that our community encompassed more than our own cities or towns. When we don't hesitate to hop in our vehicles and drive the three to seven hours it takes to get to another large city's lesbian and gay community for the weekend, it makes sense that we keep in touch with what is happening in those communities.

That expansion also added substantially to our costs and forced us into debt a condition we still haven't managed to escape. Fortunately we have a very understanding printer who has allowed us at times to get as far as six months behind in our bills.

You are holding in your hands our one



hundredth issue, something we are very proud of. If the rumours we have been hearing about the demise of *GO Info* in Ottawa are true we are now the longest publishing gay and lesbian paper or magazine in Canada. Pink Triangle Press in Ottawa, publishers of *XTRA!* and their progeny in Ottawa and Vancouver, has been publishing much longer but their first paper *The Body Politic* folded a while after we started and *XTRA!* appeared shortly after we came out. There are now a number of gay and lesbian publications on the prairies: *Swerve* in Winnipeg, *QC* and *Outword* in Calgary and *Times 10* in Edmonton. We welcome the addition of these publications aimed at the lesbian and gay community. We still believe in the importance of having our means of communication and believe the more diverse publications we have the healthier our diverse community will be.

Over the first 100 issues of *PERCEPTIONS* dozens of volunteers have been involved in getting this magazine out persistently and we are proud that we have only missed one in 100 deadlines. The bulk of the work in getting each issue out has always fallen on a very small group of dedicated, some say crazy, people who find it challenging and rewarding to contribute towards the growth of our community. We are not a terribly organized group, which has probably proven frustrating for some people at times. Usually we spend a week to ten days in heavy production mode and then take four or five weeks off to get on with the rest of our lives. The business aspects of publishing *PERCEPTIONS* now has one person doing some work most days.

Much has changed in our communities over the past twelve-and-a-half years. Gay and lesbian communities have flourished across the prairies. In our first prairie-wide issue we had a page of listings for groups and events. That has now grown to four pages and we usually have difficulty fitting everything in. The larger cities on the prairies have seen an explosion in groups providing services to gay men, lesbians and bisexuals, as well as their families and friends, not to mention an explosion in the number of commercial enterprises catering to or welcoming our community. We have also seen the growth in lesbian and gay organizations in smaller cities across the prairies. There are now

thirteen communities on the prairies with organizations for lesbians and gay men.

Twenty-five years of lesbian and gay liberation have had an effect on all our lives. It is now much easier for people to come out and find support for who they are. It is also becoming easier to find support for specific issues we experience in our lives. We still have a tendency to bitch and complain about how society treats us, and there is still some validity in that, but we need to recognize the world has indeed changed when it comes to our lives.

Working for a lesbian and gay organization, I am constantly reminded of the many ways our world has changed. A few weeks ago a mother brought her sixteen-year-old daughter up to the gay and lesbian youth group. She wanted to make sure the group was good enough for her kid. That's a big change from getting calls from irate parents threatening me with various forms of punishment because they think I'm corrupting their child. Professionals in all fields now call to find out how to provide support to lesbian and gay clients instead of trying to cure us.

We have made enormous gains in areas of lesbian and gay rights. In most parts of Canada—Alberta is the odd one out, as usual—equal rights is the policy if not always the practice. We have won victories in spousal rights in benefit plans, serving in the military and even preaching as open gays or lesbians in some churches.

However, there are still many areas where things haven't changed. AIDS continues to devastate our communities and the rising death tolls are having a major impact on our lives and our communities. Governments at all levels are still moving too slowly to effectively deal with the epidemic. Our communities have lost many workers and leaders to this disease and we will continue to lose people we know and love.

There are still forces in our society that would like to send us back to our closets and will use hate and lies to try and accomplish that. Governments are still willing to bend to that hate and refuse to make changes in legislation that prevent us from living full lives with all the benefits that accrue to those considered ac-

ceptable in our society. We have come a long way, but the battle is far from over. With the huge increases in people coming out in our communities it would not take long to bring about those changes if everyone would get involved in some way, but too many of us are still willing to sit on the sidelines and let other people do the work of affecting change.

When we began this publication twelve-and-a-half years ago, we had no idea that we would end up publishing 100 issues. We weren't sure we would make it beyond the first issue or the second or the third. We still believe there is a need for lesbian and gay publications in our communities and we have no intention of quitting. If the finances and energy remain, we may even make it to 200 issues.

In the next year we hope our long-awaited plans for change will occur. We are slowly catching up on our bills which will allow us the freedom to make those changes. We want to be able to expand our coverage of those events that affect our lives. We want to reach out to gay men, lesbians and bisexuals who reside outside those cities with organized communities. They are part of our larger community and we must not forget them.

We are grateful to all the support our readers, writers, donors, volunteers (there have been hundreds), subscribers and advertisers have provided us over the first 100 issues. They have helped make history on the prairies. We look forward to that continued support in the future. ♡



Recently I've run across numerous references to the history of the gay and lesbian movement. Lately a number of publications have run stories on some aspect of the history of lesbian and gay liberation or the queer community. Many of those publications also contain ads for 25th anniversary celebrations of communities across the country. On a recent excursion to Toronto I purchased a book that's a chronology of the movement in Canada between 1964 and 1975. It provides a valuable look at the organizations that were part of changing our lives during those early years as well as many events that marketed a turning point in the fight for full equality. (There is a brief review of that book in the entertainment section of this magazine.)

I'm pleased to see the burgeoning interest in the history of the gay and lesbian liberation movement as it's too easy to forget what life has been like for gays and lesbians over the past decades and centuries. If we don't understand where we have come from we run the risk of taking our present state of limited freedom for granted. It's too easy to take for granted what we have today and assume that it has always been so. Being aware of our history also enables us to see the enormous gains we've won and realize that perhaps we needn't be as fearful as we can sometimes be. The history of the lesbian and gay liberation movement is also a fascinating story of bravery, naivety, pain and joy, love and hate, creativity and diversity. It is very much a human story and we are all living that story whether we realize it or not.

Many people view the Stonewall Riots as the beginning of queer liberation but the Riots were only the spark that ignited the kindling that had already been put into place. Since the turn of the century there have been efforts to overcome homophobia and heterosexism and those efforts began to gain strength after World War II.

I've always believed that the gay and lesbian movement has been about fighting for the space to build support systems, or chosen families, without interference from government or homophobes and we've usually done that in creative ways.

There have been informal gay or lesbian networks on the prairies since the early years, usually centred in the larger cities, and usually known only to those fortunate enough to stumble upon them. After years of searching I found my first network in the mid 1960s. It was the Kiwanis Park in downtown Saskatoon and it provided my first real sense of belonging somewhere in this world. I might have been judged on my sex appeal but I certainly wasn't judged on my orientation, which allowed me the opportunity to talk about who I was and explore myself as a gay human. The park is still looked on by many as a place of furtive sexual encounters but it has always provided much more than that. The first warm days of spring would see a migration of gay men in search of friends they had met in summers past. Couples or small groups of men would sit for hours on the park benches catching up on each other's lives and watching the new crop of men who had discovered the park.

It was at the park that I began another adventure in building a support system, the Stoddard family. In many communities gay men formed small networks usually built around a more mature gay man and referred to those networks as "families". Usually each member would be given a female name by the matriarch of the family and admission to the family was usually determined by that matriarch.

In Saskatoon that matriarch was Dan, a drama professor at the University who had migrated here from Buffalo. Dan had chosen the family name of Stoddard, after some boyfriend he had in the United States and had taken for a first name Gladys. We met in the park and soon discovered that we weren't sexually compatible but quickly became friends. Mother adopted me and made me her second daughter with the requisite female first name. As a naive young fag, it was gratifying to have a more experienced gay man, ten years older than me, take me under wing and educate me about the intricacies of the underground gay world.

Mother was most definitely a drama queen

in more ways than one. Not only did she work as a drama professor, later becoming head of the department, but also she believed that creating drama in one's life was what made life exciting. And Mother was very good at creating drama.

Shortly after my adoption the family began to grow. Mother chose two gay men who were her age as sisters. Don became aunt Laura and Ralph became another aunt. For reasons I still do not understand my older sister was aborted out of the family. Obviously he had displeased Mother in some scandalous way and was consequently kicked out of the family. It was a lesson to me to not piss Mother off. Perhaps because I had learned in my birth family to appear to give them what they wanted while taking care of myself and doing what I felt I needed to do, I was able to survive in this family for a few years.

Subsequently to my adoption, Mother chose two more young gay men to become part of her family. Bruce and Bobbie came along into the family and became Stoddard sisters. Of course, they were given a name chosen by Mother. After a while Mother also picked even younger gay men to become her daughters' daughters.

Mother loved a good party and she, or one of her sisters, frequently staged events for gay men in the community. The parties became an important way to meet others and begin to build a larger community. In those days the gay male and gay female communities were very separated although eventually women did become a part of the parties at Mother's. The parties were especially helpful over the long winter months when cruising the park wasn't a pleasant or profitable venture.

Mother loved to cook and would invite family members, and others, who were estranged from their birth families over for Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners. She was always experimenting with new dishes and cooking methods so one could never be sure what to expect when invited for dinner. It could be an elaborate full course dinner or it could simply be a turkey with dressing and

nothing else.

Family events were usually anything but dull. Dishing and bitching were very much a part of the interactions and as the evening progressed so would the attempts to outbitch or outdish the other family members. *The Boys In The Band* was tame compared to many evenings at Mother's. Points were awarded to those who could be the wittiest or cleverest in the bitching and dishing department. The pronoun he was seldom part of the vocabulary. Mother usually garnered the most points for being the wit-tiest and bitchiest.

Understatement was not part of Mother's lifestyle. Her home was furnished in stage props left over from recent plays at the Drama Department. Sunday dinner was often served around a fake grand piano and the toilet was situated in the middle of an ornate throne left over from a play about some queen. Mother liked to sew and her tastes again were anything but subtle. She thought nothing of sewing up a pair of pants with an 84" bell-bottom or pants made from 1" squares of alternating blue coloured fabric. At one point someone broke in and stole all her creations and to this day we suspect it was to protect us from Mother's outlandish sense of fashion.

Mother was also well organized in keeping track of the many men in her life and in town. She religiously maintained a large box of file cards with every gay man she knew listed. An elaborate coding system described in great detail their many attributes and flaws, sexual and otherwise. If you were interested in a new man in town, Mother could inevitably give you details about his availability and interests. Of course, you had to be on good terms with Mother to be privy to such information.

Being part of the Stoford family was an important part of my early life as a gay man. It provided me with a sense of belonging and a sense of family. There were aspects of the family that bothered me. I never could get used to calling other men she or her. If you pissed Mother off you could find yourself uninvited to the many parties. Frequently the dishing and bitching could get downright vicious and mean spirited.

However, Mother did have a sense of the need for family or community and she could

be extremely generous to new people coming out or new in town. She was usually free in her advice about how to survive as a gay man in a world that was considerably more homophobic than it is today. The Stoford family also provided the seed that led to the development of the first gay and lesbian group in Saskatoon.


In 1971 Mother helped pay for a post office box so an ad for Saskatoon Gay Liberation could be placed in Vancouver's *Georgia Straight* newspaper. We would both meet with people who had responded to the ad and provide support and assistance in coming out and connecting with the growing community in Saskatoon. A number of family members were heavily involved in starting the first gay and lesbian liberation groups in Saskatoon. Mother, along with her sisters and others, graciously hosted house parties where an admission of \$2 was charged to help finance the development of that first group.

By the fall of 1971 the community was well on its way to developing the first lesbian and gay social organization, the Zodiac Friendship Society. We had also formed political action groups called Saskatoon Gay Action

and the Gay Students Alliance on campus. As the community began to develop the need for the Stoford family declined and Mother began to find herself eclipsed by her daughters. She began referring to me as Miss Gay Lib because she felt I had taken the spotlight off her, something that was unforgivable.

As I look back on those years I realize how important groups like the Stoford family were. Similar families had developed in other cities as well. For all its fault it did provide a place where people could be find support for being gay and support for exploring ways to survive as a gay man in a hostile environment.

Mother has ended up in New York trying to earn a living as an actor. Saskatoon has gone on to build a strong and vital lesbian and gay community. I'm proud to have been a part of building that community and I'm proud to have been a part of the Stoford family.

Mother regularly calls my two sisters who still live in town although she doesn't call me. I guess I'm no longer her favourite daughter. 

KEEPING OUR HISTORY

(Winnipeg) The Winnipeg Gay/Lesbian Resource Centre is looking for financial support for two projects with the Gay/Lesbian Archive. The archive, which is housed in the Resource Centre, was established in 1989 to record gay and lesbian life in Manitoba. Holdings currently comprise about 70 metres of paper records (organizations' documents and publications, personal papers, newsletters and periodical clippings), 1,700 posters, 1,300 photographs, 1,150 audio and video tapes, and 950 cultural items (buttons, T-shirts, and the like).

The Centre has applied for two grants to develop two projects with the archives. Volunteers do most of the work at the archives but grants are needed to purchase equipment and storage materials and pay trained staff for major projects. In order to obtain the grants the Centre must raise 50% of the cost of the projects, so they are actively soliciting donations.

With one grant the Centre wants to convert their material using the standard Rules for Archival Description (R.A.D.). To date the material is not catalogued by automated means, using instead idiosyncratic systems to describe the material. To maintain their status as an archive they must move to the

R.A.D. system which means purchasing a computer and database that will accommodate their material.

The archive is used frequently for sociological, legal, journalistic, anthropological and historical purposes. Because of the volume of material and the antiquated system of cataloguing it is becoming difficult for people to access material easily.

The second project is to process two significant collections recently received by the archive from the Council on Homosexuality and Religion and the Winnipeg Gay Media Collective. Both groups operated in Winnipeg for a number of years and the archives has received over 13 linear feet of paper from the two groups as well as video and audio tapes.

"Examination of the lives of lesbians and gay men is especially valuable for individuals who are homosexual, and for their families," says Centre president Monika Beatty. "Publications based on material in the archive have been useful in combating prejudice and discriminatory practises, and in enabling sensible, ethical and constructive approaches to life in these circumstances."

Donations to assist the two projects can be forwarded to Winnipeg Gay/Lesbian Resource Centre, 1 - 222 Osborne Street South, Winnipeg, MB R3C 2Z6. All donations will receive an income tax receipt. Additional information on the projects or the Archive can be obtained by calling the Centre at (204) 474-0212.

NO QUEER HISTORY HERE

(Red Deer) It appears that not only do Conservatives in Alberta believe that gays and lesbians do not deserve protection against discrimination, or the right to be foster parents, but that the history of lesbians and gays in the province should be silenced. A furore has erupted over the awarding of a \$10,000 grant to the Red Deer and District Museum for a study of gay and lesbian history in central Alberta.

Victor Doerksen, MLA for Red Deer South, said the museum should give the money back. "People should be recognized for what they accomplish, not because of the behaviour they have chosen," he said. Doerksen claimed his constituency office received 50 calls complaining about the project and that the museum has an obligation to respect community wishes.

Doerksen was later joined by Alberta Treasurer Stockwell Day who said the museum is not the proper place to advance the "cause" of gays. While he was minister of family and social services, Day was responsible for the policy forbidding gays and lesbians from being foster parents. Day, who has been outspoken in opposition to the lesbian and gay community, is an ordained minister and was an assistant pastor and head of a Christian school.

Alberta Reform Member of Parliament Cliff Breitzkreuz also joined the chorus of politicians opposed to the grant. "Only 30 years ago, homosexuality was in the Criminal Code and people were prosecuted if they were caught sodomizing. It is just strange to go from one extreme to another in such a short time," he said.

"It never ceases to amaze me," said Murray Billett, a spokesperson for the Gay and Lesbian Awareness Society of Edmonton. "First they said it's OK to fire us, then they refuse to allow us to continue to foster kids. Now they are saying we do not want you to exist, we do not want you to validate your history and that is astonishing. It smacks of nothing short of bigotry." Billett said the message to Alberta gays is to be secret about their sexuality. "This is another message which says stay in the closet," he added.

Wendy Martindale, director of the Red Deer

and District Museum said they have no intention of giving the money back. The funds come from lottery money and were approved by a panel of people with expertise in museums. "Gays are a group that has been traditionally under-represented in historical research," she added. She suggested the politicians' attitudes were similar to walking into a library and removing books simply because they don't agree with the subject matter.

Community Development Minister Shirley McClellan says she has no intention of asking for the money back. However, she did say she will review the process under which the grant was awarded.

Premier Ralph Klein also disagreed with his ministers, saying the grant was appropriate and that his government is not in the business of censorship. He added that he stands behind the grant and the museum.

The project which the grant was awarded for has been ongoing for three years now. The \$10,000 will allow the museum to hire a researcher to speed up the project which is attempting to document gay and lesbian life in the province. The museum is gathering photographs, oral histories and historical facts to document the lives of lesbians and gay men in the community. They are also collecting information on gay and lesbian organizations and events.

Fifteen years ago this March a new publication was born. I don't think any of us involved with that first issue gave any thought to whether we'd be celebrating our first anniversary let alone our 15th. Both the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre of Saskatoon and Gay & Lesbian Support Services were publishing newsletters to inform the community about what was happening on the gay scene. Both groups also suffered from a lack of resources, human and financial, so they readily agreed to fold their individual publications, *GAZE* and *Gay Times* respectively, and use the scarce resources that went into those publications to produce one new community publication. Both organizations ceased to exist within a few years of the start of *Perceptions* but we've remained in business independently.

Stuart Davidson, who went on to be a longtime worker with *Angles* in Vancouver, and myself were editing the two separate publications and readily agreed the best use of our energy would be to produce one bigger and better paper for the lesbian and gay community in Saskatoon. We both saw a need for, and the importance of having, a vehicle that would keep people informed about events happening in our community. In 1983 lesbians and gay men were still invisible in the mainstream media and information on our community was difficult to obtain.

The first issue, six sheets of 8½" × 11" paper folded, appeared in March 1983 and carried stories on the emerging AIDS crisis, the joys of being a Gayline volunteer, problems experienced by Gays & Lesbians at the U of S in maintaining a campus profile, and the upcoming summer of softball. The issue also carried a listing of the five support groups and one cha-cha palace available in Saskatoon. It was produced the old fashioned way, with a Gestetner machine, and was scheduled to come out six times a year.

The masthead of that first issue listed eight volunteers: Eric B, Stuart D, Bruce G, Leo G, Gens H, Luc M, Brian M and Jim S. Two of the eight are still involved in queer publishing and interestingly two went on to open guesthouses. Is that my next career?

The second issue grew to four sheets of 8½" × 14" paper folded and the volunteers grew from eight to twelve with the welcome addition

of two women and Neil Richards. To protect some volunteers' anonymity, full names were not used in the masthead until issue 11, which appeared in November of 1984. By the third issue, *Perceptions* had become a provincial publication with listings for groups in Regina and Prince Albert as well as Saskatoon.

The next change came with issue 12, published in January of 1985. The Collective felt there was sufficient energy to produce eight issues a year with the hope that we would soon grow to ten or twelve issues a year with an influx of new volunteers and new energy. We still haven't managed to make the leap from more than eight issues a year and remain with our frequently out-of-sync publishing schedule.

In January of 1989 *Perceptions* made its next big leap, growing from a Saskatchewan publication to a prairies publication with listings of queer organizations and businesses across Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Gays and lesbians on the prairies have always been willing to travel great distances to connect with others, so providing information on the three prairie provinces seemed natural. We also moved to the current size of paper, something we've decided to stay with.

The move to the larger format and circulation threatened the health of *Perceptions* for some time. Our costs jumped substantially and it's only been in the last year that we've been able to climb out of debt and actually have a few dollars extra in the bank. We've been discussing new changes to our publication for a number of months now but a shortage of energy to initiate those changes has hampered us. However, we expect our 16th anniversary issue to look somewhat different than this anniversary issue.

Working on *Perceptions* for fifteen years has been a rewarding, and frequently challenging, experience for me. I have felt blessed by the number of people I have worked with over the years. Some of our writers have gone on to write for other publications and even been paid for their work, something we've never been able to do at *Perceptions*. A number of volunteers have passed away, often as a result of AIDS, although cancer, substance abuse, and suicide have

also claimed some. Many more have moved from Saskatoon to other parts of the country and the world.

I have made many lifelong friends through *Perceptions*. Some of those friends I still see, if only one weekend every six weeks as we scramble to get another issue out. Others I correspond with by phone as they send in their information for the upcoming issue or discuss a possible article for the upcoming issue.

Much has changed over the past fifteen years. When we started publishing there were few queer publications in the land. *Angles* in Vancouver had just begun publishing and *The Body Politic*, the premiere queer publication in Canada, was just folding to be reborn as *Xtra!* in Toronto. We were the only publication on the prairies dealing with issues of being lesbian or gay.

Since we began, many publications have come and gone and there are now lesbian and gay publications being published across Canada. On the prairies we now have *Outlooks* in Calgary, *Times 10* in Edmonton and *Swerve* in Winnipeg. We welcome these new publications as we feel our original belief of the need for our own publications is as true today as it was fifteen years ago. The more venues we have to share news about our community and highlight the diversity of our community can only aid in the development of strong and viable communities.

Over the past fifteen years I've been able to witness and report on the incredible changes that have occurred in the lives of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people across the prairies and around the world. The world is definitely a changed place from where it was fifteen years ago. We now have human rights protection in most parts of this country and with any luck Alberta will soon join the rest of us. We've moved on to issues of spousal rights, marriage, adoption and gays in the education system. Fifteen years ago we were fighting for the right to exist. Today we're fighting for the right to full and equal lives.

At the same time many things haven't changed. AIDS is still with us and is still killing members of our extended family. The face of the epidemic has changed but infection rates in our community are still too high because of the pervasiveness of homophobia. It's time we changed how we deal with HIV and AIDS. We must position it as one of the many health issues our community faces and address it in concert with the host of health and social problems brought about by homophobia. We can no longer afford to fight HIV and AIDS as stand-alone issues because they are part of a complex set of problems in our community.

Coming out, while easier for many, is still a perilous journey for most people. We're seeing an explosion in the number of people in their '40s, '50s, and older who've decided they can no longer afford to live in the closet. Unfortunately, our community is still focused too much on youth and activities for youth. As our community has matured we haven't seen the same maturing in those businesses and organizations that attempt to meet our needs.

We're also seeing people coming out at much younger ages but all too often the resources to deal with their unique set of issues are not in place. The education system is still unbelievably homophobic.

Lesbian and gay teachers, who could serve as important role models, do not feel safe being open and visible in their classrooms. Non-gay teachers, even those who are supportive of lesbian and gay people, do not feel it's safe to engage their students in discussions of lesbian and gay issues in their classroom. The invisibility of lesbians, gays and bisexuals continues to be the norm within the education system.

Suicide, substance abuse, mental illness, isolation and loneliness are still epidemic in our community. Already in 1998 I've run across three incidents of youth suicide and in all three cases I have good reason to believe sexual orientation was an issue with the young men who killed themselves. Homophobia is alive and well and continues to exact an enormous toll on all our lives.

Where will *Perceptions* be 15 years from now? We've never focused much on the future at *Perceptions*. Our energy has been more immediate, getting the next issue out. Perhaps that is part of the reason for our longevity. Instead of focusing down the road we've been more immediate. Plodding along issue by issue. That's not to say we haven't had, and don't continue to have dreams for our little publication. We're hopeful that we'll be able to put some of those dreams in place over the next year.

There have been many times when I've considered leaving *Perceptions* and moving on, but inevitably when I entertain those thoughts someone will send in their renewal with a little note letting us know how important *Perceptions* is in keeping them in touch with their community. It's been our readers who've kept us going. Your comments, most of which have been positive, as well as your financial support through subscription renewals and donations have been an important part in keeping us going. Over the past fifteen years well over \$25,000 has been donated by our readers and that money has helped keep our head above water, although a few times we did come close to going under.

We're still going to keep publishing *Perceptions* one issue at a time and we still welcome more people to get involved and help complete another fifteen years of publishing "the prairies gay and lesbian newsmagazine." We believe our original ideal of providing a forum for the exchange of information about our lives and the discussion of issues that impact on our lives still holds. Only by having outlets to help keep us in tune with our community will we be able to reach our full potential as individuals and as a community. See you in 2013. [2]

CHORUS CELEBRATES 10TH SEASON

(Saskatoon) Fall 2000 marks the beginning of the 2000–2001 season, which happens to be the 10th season for the Bridge City Chorus, which gives me an excuse to talk about our history. In the last issue you read the story of how Winnipeg got a chorus. It was the result of Jeff Stafflund having moved from Regina that has one because James McNinch moved from Saskatoon (Jeff was in Saskatoon before as well, but wasn't in Bridge City). So that makes Prairie Pride the proud mother chorus of Rainbow Harmony Project and BCC the even prouder grandmother. It should come as no surprise that Saskatoon got a chorus by the same route. In 1991 Ralph Wushke moved here from Ottawa where he was a founding member of the gay men's chorus there. He got to our city he got to know some musical men through his job as director of the new AIDS Saskatoon. They got together around a piano in one of the guys' basement for a while as the word got out about a new men's chorus. Ralph (being the very gregarious type) came to meet a young musical director at St. John's Anglican Cathedral who offered the church hall for a rehearsal venue. Not long after that, the young man, David Carlin, agreed also to be our director and we moved right into the sanctuary, formed a steering committee and called ourselves the Bridge City Men's Chorus. One of the first men in that group around the piano offered to sit at that instrument and we've kept Ron Knoll there ever since.

While the Rainbow Harmony Project exploded onto the scene, the BCMC sort of sneaked on. It took us two years to learn enough material to just put on a cabaret with a number of small sets that made the increasingly inebriated customers think we sang more than we actually did. We sure were sick of "What a Wonderful World" by then! Marion Alexander was at that first gig and was so entertained that she talked to some women and in a couple of years we dropped the "Men's" from our name. However, it's been a struggle to attract many women to the group so we have men singing soprano and alto parts and female tenors and baritones. So far people seem to like the sound just fine, but it does make music selection and balance a challenge.

After David moved on to a bigger city (a constant problem in this province), we hired a straight woman who had only been a vocal coach for small groups before. We provided only a bit of an education for Elaine Thaller as she already had a number of gay friends, some of whom were in the chorus. Elaine certainly taught us a lot more. In her helping with the choice of music, Bridge City found that a mixing of musical styles made for the happiest crowds and made for a fuller appreciation of music. It is pleasing to see Winnipeg's chorus adopting a similar approach. After all, they are using our music, and they certainly did us proud.

After a number of years, Elaine found that her schedule was just too stressful and had to leave us. One of the members had an aunt with a long musical background as well as a piano and organ shop, and so Marie Jolie became not only our wonderful new director but also a patron. She even challenged Elaine's talent in the wild-women-sure-can-party department! Which is why we missed her so much when illness and an operation kept her from travelling to Winnipeg with us and why we're so sad that this was her last year with us.

Bridge City Chorus has truly benefited greatly from the training given by our skilled directors. A number of us have gone on to take voice lessons and/or get involved with other choirs and musical theatre. After a few years some of these men were finding that the chorus didn't offer enough of a challenge. To meet that need a smaller ensemble of men was formed but soon resulted in friction when it was seen to appear elitist and sexist. Unfortunately, some of the men felt they had to leave and formed a separate men's group. Though Camarada was born out of circumstances that were not the best, Saskatoon benefits from another talented source of entertainment. Camarada not only contains current members of the BCC as well but is open to any straight men who want to join in the fun. This is different from Bridge City which, for reasons of personal comfort, still chooses to be a community chorus for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered folk only.

Now that you've read our exhaustive (if not

exhausting) history, you're either already a fan or just don't have anything better to do and are wondering why any of this matters. Most obviously it matters to those of us in a chorus. For those of us who love to sing it is a wonderful opportunity to hone our skills while revelling in the pure joy of music that is magnified when in a group of those who share that love. Singing with other queers is not only safe but so nurturing and self-affirming to be with "your own people." You wouldn't think that simply having a couple of things in common like singing and preferring the same sex would forge such a bond. Or just going for coffee together occasionally after rehearsal or 2–3 parties or biannual road trips would make you feel like family. But after a few months off for the summer, when we get back together in the fall we realize how much we miss each other and how complete being together makes you feel. These kinds of strong connections are hard enough to come by in our big city societies. But living in an unwanted fringe of that society creates a need for support that is good to get from a support or social group but not quite enough. There's something about getting together and creating a thing that's beautiful and full of joy in a situation that has some struggle and pain, that satisfies at a surprisingly deep level.

Great as it is for us lucky chorus members, I think there is no little benefit for our queer community. It's obvious that people have a good time at our concerts, but let's be honest, there's lots of more talented professional entertainment out there. Just going to our concerts alone seems to meet a need. The simple act of gathering together to celebrate music, life and our lives as queer folk helps us place ourselves in the world as part of something good. We do belong here and we do have our people to whom we matter. In a very real and powerful way, gathering together around song in its poetic ability to move our heart gives voice to this truth and need that the rest of society gets all the time.

So stay tuned, all of you in the Saskatoon area, for some special events to mark our anniversary. Better yet, if you like to sing why don't you join the chorus and be a part of the year-long celebration!

— Glen Horton

THE ADVENTURES OF A PRAIRIE FAG - PART I

by Gens Hellquist

March 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of efforts to build a gay and lesbian community in Saskatoon. While there were small groups of gay men and other small groups of gay women going back at least to the 1920s, there were no organized initiatives to address the issues that affected gay people until the first formal queer organization was begun in March 1971.

It's important for us to be aware of where we have come from and how we got to where we are today. The lessons of the past can help guide our actions in the present and future. I have been part of the identified gay and lesbian community since I came out in 1965 at the tender age of 19 and have been involved in establishing organizations and services in the queer community since I helped found the first queer group in Saskatoon in 1971. This is also my 30th anniversary as a queer activist.

It has been a fascinating journey with times of sheer exhilaration and times of deep despair. I have had the honour and privilege to meet and work with hundreds of wonderful men and women, gay and non-gay, who have toiled to build a place where all queer people are valued and cherished.

This five-part series is a brief overview of my perceptions of Saskatoon's queer community. It is told through my eyes and others will have somewhat different stories to tell; stories seen through their eyes. However one sees the events and issues, we all have shared in the passions of carving out safe places for ourselves and our queer family.



I was five when my family moved to Saskatoon in 1951. Already I was developing a sense that somehow I was different from those around me. I didn't feel I fit or belonged somehow, but I had no idea what that difference was. For a time I questioned if perhaps I wasn't adopted because I didn't feel that I fit with my family. It wasn't until I hit puberty that the reality of what that difference was hit me.

Sex was one of those things polite people didn't talk about in public during the 1950s and homosexuality was certainly never mentioned in polite company. When I was 13 I first heard the word 'homosexual' somewhere and something about it felt familiar. I ran to the dictionary to check on its meaning. I finally had a term to describe my difference.

Obtaining information on homosexuality was next to impossible in the '50s. At times I wondered if I might be the only homosexual in Saskatoon but somehow that didn't make sense. What I felt seemed so natural to me, although there were times when the thought of being homosexual terrified me.

By my early teens I discovered physique magazines which amazingly were readily available on newsstands throughout the city. I kept count of certain store's stock and soon realized that others were buying them. While the magazines espoused the importance of physical health it was obvious to me that they were directed at people like me. Guys who like other guys. I mean, all those photos of naked or nearly naked guys.

I had been having sex with a neighbourhood kid for a while but when he discovered girls I was left in the lurch. Cruising for other gay guys became a

mission for me except I had no idea of where to cruise. Cruising magazine racks in the corner drug store became a routine in my efforts to meet someone else like me.

I did connect with one other guy through my cruising but I struck paydirt one afternoon in a downtown book store. We both noticed each other checking out the physique magazines and when he left the store I got up the nerve to follow. As I exited the store I noticed him peering in the store window next door. Somehow I summoned up the courage to approach him. We talked for a few minutes and he informed me that gay men met one another in the park around the Bessborough Hotel.

That evening I hastily made my way down to the park and ran into the fellow I'd met earlier that afternoon in the book store. We sat on a park bench and I quizzed him for hours about the park, the community, being gay and how to meet other men. He patiently answered my eager questions and was my first mentor. I never did sleep with him and his name is lost in time but he was an important part of my discovering that I wasn't alone.

The park became my second home during the summers. Most nights I would head down shortly after supper or after I was done coaching the little league softball team I coached in those days. It was a form of community centre, or family, which provided a sense of belonging to those who were fortunate enough to find it. While many went down there with thoughts of finding sex or perhaps even a relationship, for most it was primarily a place where we had space to be who we were and support for who we were.

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

I also learned that gay men drank at the bar in the Bessborough Hotel as well as the bar in the King George Hotel. Apparently, both had been places where gay men met for decades. Unfortunately one had to be 21 to enter a licensed establishment in those days and I was only 19. Coming from a religious family, I still hadn't tasted my first drop of liquor. That first winter after discovering the park was a very long and lonely one.

I soon developed a circle of friends who I would visit with regularly in the park. I was invited to house parties and taken under wing by a couple of older gay men, one of whom I had a relationship with over one winter.

My visit to the park became an important part of developing a community and place to belong. I met my first lover down there and spent a glorious month with him before he decided he wasn't ready yet, having just left his wife and two kids back in Ontario. I made new friends who accepted and supported me and met people to sleep with.

While the park provided an important sense of community, it wasn't long before I became aware that I needed more. The evidence of alcoholism and depression throughout the community of men I had met and become friends with was obvious. I wasn't out long before I heard that one of the guys in the park crowd had killed himself because he couldn't live in a society that was so intolerant.

I finally learned to tolerate a rye and coke so I could connect with other people in the two bars available to us in Saskatoon. Usually a few tables of gay men could be found huddled in a corner of the Cove room in the King George or at the long sit up bar in the Harlequin room of the Bessborough Hotel.

By the late 1960s, word came back that there were private clubs for gay people in both Calgary and Edmonton. The news of the Stonewall Riots also made its way to Saskatoon through the *Georgia Straight*, a counterculture magazine from Vancouver that carried information about things gay. A few of us trekked off to Calgary to see this new gay club. We discovered it through an alley, in a back door and down in the basement. Walking through those doors was an exciting and terrifying moment for me. Once inside I relaxed and started to enjoy the feeling of being in a place where men and women could openly be themselves and, my gawd, openly dance with someone of the same sex. It was also the first time I met lesbians as they had never been part of the park, bar or party scene that I was familiar with.

Soon I was suggesting that maybe we should try and start such a club in Saskatoon. My comments were usually met with replies

like, "It would never work," "No one would dare show up," etc. My enthusiasm for starting a "gay club" didn't wane, although I became less vocal about it, biding my time.

I had developed a friendship with Dan Nalbach, a professor in, and later head of, the Drama Department at the University. Dan was an American and brought along a *Boys in the Band* sensibility to gay life. Camp and bitching was an important part of his life as a gay man and he tried to coach me and turn me into a proper fag. He became another important mentor in my life.

Before I met Dan he had initiated what he called the Stoford family with himself as the matriarch, or mother. I became his second daughter; the first one had been aborted because he had done something that infuriated Dan. Mother added two other gay men as my sisters and the family took off. It included two aunts and grew to include two other young gay men as my sisters and then two even younger men to be my daughters. Mother's parties became notorious across the prairies.

While the Stoford family and the surrounding gay community provided an important part of family and belonging for me, it also felt uncomfortable at times. The heavy drinking and deep depressions were common occurrences in the circle of friends I had developed and each year we heard of a few more who committed suicide. I could never get really comfortable with the need to change pronouns for genders as well as the constant competitions to see who could be the bitchiest and therefore the wittiest.

By 1971 I had finally convinced Dan that we should try and start a group for gay people in Saskatoon, something like the clubs in Calgary and Edmonton that we had both visited. We knew that the small group of gay men we were aware of was only the tip of the iceberg. We needed something in place and visible that would allow more people to come out and become part of our small queer community.

In March of that year we pooled our money and rented a post office box and forwarded a listing to the *Georgia Straight* in Vancouver. In early April a listing that read "Saskatoon Gay Liberation, PO Box 3043, Saskatoon, SK" appeared in the community page of the publication. Dan and I sat back waiting for the deluge of mail we expected to come in. 12



THE ADVENTURES OF A PRAIRIE FAG – PART 2

by Gens Hellquist

March 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of efforts to build a gay and lesbian community in Saskatoon. While there were small groups of gay men and other small groups of gay women going back at least to the 1920s, there were no organized initiatives to address the issues that affected gay people until the first formal queer organization was begun in March 1971.

It's important for us to be aware of where we have come from and how we got to where we are today. The lessons of the past can help guide our actions in the present and future. I have been part of the identified gay and lesbian community since I came out in 1965 at the tender age of 19 and have been involved in establishing organizations and services in the queer community since I helped found the first queer group in Saskatoon in 1971. This is also my 30th anniversary as a queer activist.

It has been a fascinating journey with times of sheer exhilaration and times of deep despair. I have had the honour and privilege to meet and work with hundreds of wonderful men and women, gay and non-gay, who have toiled to build a place where all queer people are valued and cherished.

This five-part series is a brief overview of my perceptions of Saskatoon's queer community. It is told through my eyes and others will have somewhat different stories to tell; stories seen through their eyes. However one sees the events and issues, we all have shared in the passions of carving out safe places for ourselves and our queer family.

By early 1971 queer issues had begun to bubble to the surface. Two years earlier, Pierre Trudeau, then Justice Minister, had amended the Criminal Code to decriminalize anal and oral intercourse, although being illegal had never stopped us. Word of the Stonewall Riots had slowly seeped into Canada and onto the prairies. We had come through a decade of marches calling for equality for blacks and women. We began to question why we also shouldn't have equality.

The *Georgia Straight* listing for Saskatoon Gay Liberation appeared in the April 1971 issue and slowly responses trickled in. One of the first letters was from a lesbian, so we arranged a meeting. Neither Dan or myself knew any lesbians in Saskatoon so we were excited about finally meeting one locally. We met her at Dan's house and the first thing she told us was that the name she had signed the letter with was false and that her real name was Mavis Carleton. Mavis was a single parent with two daughters who realized that she needed to have a community for support.

Another letter we received was from a young man from Prince

Albert who had moved to Saskatoon to attend university. Irv Warner—he later changed his first name to Tom—became a major force in Saskatoon's queer community in those early years. When he finished university he moved on to Toronto where he has remained active in liberation politics ever since.

By the summer of 1971 we had developed a small group of people interested in forming some type of queer organization. Over the summer we conducted a survey of known gays and lesbians in Saskatoon to get a sense of the level of interest in forming some form of queer organization. We also started holding house parties where guests were expected to chip in \$2 to attend—the beginning of our war chest.

We felt the need to adopt some public drinking establishment as a meeting place in Saskatoon. The Cove Room in the King George had been a pub where a few gay people drank but that bar was

usually crowded and finding the space for the hordes we expected would be difficult there. We settled on the Apollo Room in the Ritz Hotel as the place to take over. It wasn't the prettiest looking bar in town, with its giant posters of the Apollo moon landing, but it had lots of room. Before long it became a popular drinking establishment and on some nights there could be up to 50 gay people there. The owners soon recognized that we had increased their business substantially and became very protective. Anyone hassling the gays would be turfed out.

That fall, two more queer organizations were formed. Saskatoon Gay Action (SGA) was formed as a political organization functioning in the general community, and Gay Students Alliance (GSA) was formed to bring about change on the university campus. Both organizations were comprised of the same small handful of people, with most of us being students or staff at the university. An ad was placed in the campus newspaper for GSA listing the home phone number of Bruce Garman, one of the early organizers. Bruce was living at home with his parents at the time and they were less than impressed by the phone calls that came in at 2am.

After our community survey showed significant interest in a queer organization, a committee was formed to draft bylaws and a constitution and to investigate incorporation with the provincial government. In January of 1972 the first official meeting of the Zodiac Friendship Society was held, the constitution was approved and a board of directors was elected. We weren't sure if the government would register a group with 'gay' in their name and, as it was the Age of Aquarius, we settled on Zodiac as that would encompass all. I became the first President of that organization.

(Continues on next page...)

*Neither Dan or myself knew
any lesbians in Saskatoon
so we were excited about
finally meeting one locally.*

(Continued from previous page...)

Through articles in various alternative publications we had learned that Unitarian congregations in various parts of the United States were supportive of the gay community so we approached the local Unitarian congregation to see if we could rent their facilities for functions. They agreed and on Friday, February 11, 1972 a Valentine's Dance, the first ever public gay function in Saskatoon, took place at the Unitarian's church at 502 Main Street.

We didn't know what to expect. Would anyone show up? Would the police raid us? Would gay bashers descend on us? We spent the night peeking out the door to see who was coming. Two big burly construction workers showed up. No one knew them but none of us had the courage to refuse them entry. We all breathed a sigh of relief when they soon were spotted dancing together on our small dance floor. Approximately 50 people showed up for that first dance and the police and bashers stayed away.

We approached the Unitarians about renting their hall weekly and they agreed. Our rent was based on how many people showed up so we were guaranteed not to lose money. We moved the dances to Saturday night even though it meant we had to stay and make sure the hall was clean and ready for worship the next morning. A small group of us would hustle around Saturdays, collecting booze, supplies and a sound system. We would move the pews in the hall to the outer perimeter, set up a bar, set up the sound system and replace the white light bulbs with red and blue ones to make the place look less like a church and more like a club. The process would be reversed in the early morning hours of Sunday.

We became bolder and decided to place an ad in the *Star Phoenix* which read, "Zodiac Friendship Society — an organization for gay men and women." We began receiving more letters, although most of them were from people who said they'd like to join as they were "happy" people. Usually it fell to me to call them to tell them what we meant by the term gay. Usually they were no longer happy when I told them who we were for. Eventually we had the ad changed to read 'homosexual' instead of 'gay.' The *Star Phoenix* was reluctant to include the word homosexual, but after Mavis refused to leave until they agreed to the change they acquiesced.

We began drop-ins on Wednesday nights and advertised the Unitarian's phone number for a Gayline available on those nights. We never did tell the Unitarians that we were advertising their phone number as a Gayline. In a short period of time we were operating two nights a week but it started to take a toll on people's energy. For a few months we hired a manager to be responsible for getting supplies for the dances and seeing that things were set up and volunteers in place for our Saturday queer dance club. In November of 1972 Saskatoon hosted a conference of prairie clubs with representation from queer organizations in Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Regina attending. Eventually we began to wear down and dances were put on hold late that year.

Things remained quiet until early in 1973 when we signed a lease for a small space at 224A - 2nd Avenue South. The new centre held its first dance March 17. Soon we were operating drop-ins and phone lines on Tuesdays and Wednesdays with a lesbian

drop-in on Friday and dances every Saturday. We were a growing concern.

As we began to come out as individuals and as a community, the name of Zodiac Friendship Society was changed to the Gay Community Centre and later to the Gay/Lesbian Community Centre. We wrote briefs to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and Attorney-General Roy Romanow, calling for human rights legislation to be changed to include protection against discrimination for gays and lesbians. It took 20 years after the first brief was presented in 1973 for the government to finally change the Act.

We soon outgrew our facilities on 2nd Avenue and moved to a 6,000 square foot facility above the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre on 20th Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues. We were now open six nights a week for drop-ins and phone lines and were also running a dance club on Fridays and Saturdays. All work had been done by volunteers but by 1976 we were such a going concern that I was hired, at minimum wage, to be the first executive director.

During those years the community grew rapidly as men and women started to emerge from their closets. We were publishing regular newsletters and providing training for those community groups and professionals courageous enough to want to learn about our issues and needs. We had the funds to send representatives to national gay conferences which were held in places like Ottawa, Toronto, and Winnipeg. In 1977 Saskatoon was host to the fifth National Gay Conference with representatives from across Canada in attendance.

As the community grew, so did divisions and in 1977 a major rift occurred over what direction the Community Centre should take. Some of us felt that we had to become more professional and responsible by having paid staff, while others felt the organization could be run entirely by volunteers. In the fall of 1977 I had had enough of the infighting and resigned as executive director and went to work at Community AID Resource Centre, Saskatoon's crisis and information line.


The Community Centre moved once again in the late 1970s to a basement space on 3rd Avenue, the current location of the Basement Jazz Club. As the decade went on, the dance club aspect of the Centre took over and programming around phone lines, coming out groups and other support groups essentially ceased. The Centre had become a dance club with dances happening two nights a week.

In 1978 a group of people formed Metamorphosis, a weekend of social activities and workshops on various issues. The weekends ended with a huge Thanksgiving Feast. In the late 1970s another small group felt the need for phonelines and support groups to once again be offered to Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community. Saskatoon Gay & Lesbian Support Services was formed and began offering a phone line, community library, coming out groups, a newsletter and other support groups to the queer community.

(Please see *Adventures* on page 10)

Adventures *(continued from page 5)*

By the end of the decade a new after hours club, After Dark, opened. It was located on 22nd Street and Avenue B and was managed by a gay man who had plans to turn it into a commercial gay club. After Dark soon changed from an after hours club to become a regular bar, open regular hours with liquor service. It changed its name to Numbers and began attracting a regular clientele of gays and lesbians. As the popularity of Numbers grew, fewer and fewer people began attending the dances at the Community Centre.

As the 1970s came to a close, Saskatoon had developed a thriving gay and lesbian community. It had diversified and people no longer felt the same need to work together. It had been a decade of intense highs along with many lows, but Saskatoon's queer community had arrived. 



THE ADVENTURES OF A PRAIRIE FAG — PART 3

by Gens Hellquist

March 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of efforts to build a gay and lesbian community in Saskatoon. While there were small groups of gay men and other small groups of gay women going back at least to the 1920s, there were no organized initiatives to address the issues that affected gay people until the first formal queer organization was begun in March 1971.

It's important for us to be aware of where we have come from and how we got to where we are today. The lessons of the past can help guide our actions in the present and future. I have been part of the identified gay and lesbian community since I came out in 1965 at the tender age of 19 and have been involved in establishing organizations and services in the queer community since I helped found the first queer group in Saskatoon in 1971. This is also my 30th anniversary as a queer activist.

It has been a fascinating journey with times of sheer exhilaration and times of deep despair. I have had the honour and privilege to meet and work with hundreds of wonderful men and women, gay and non-gay, who have toiled to build a place where all queer people are valued and cherished.

This five-part series is a brief overview of my perceptions of Saskatoon's queer community. It is told through my eyes and others will have somewhat different stories to tell; stories seen through their eyes. However one sees the events and issues, we all have shared in the passions of carving out safe places for ourselves and our queer family.



As the 1980s dawned, dark clouds began to appear on the horizon. The '70s, a decade of sexual revolution and social change had wound down and conservatism was on the rise across North America. Ronald Reagan was elected President in the United States, which signalled a shift from the liberating days of the past decade to the dark days of the '80s. In 1982 the NDP government in Saskatchewan lost to the Progressive Conservatives who ushered in a decade of intolerance and corruption. By 1984 the conservative sweep was complete with Brian Mulroney's Tories sweeping to power in Ottawa.

Change was also occurring in Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community. The Gay/Lesbian Community Centre of Saskatoon (GLCCS) was running out of steam with many gay men abandoning it to dance the night away at the new commercial gay club in town, Numbers, which moved to its location on 2nd Avenue and 26th Street. Gay & Lesbian Support Services (GLSS) continued to grow and was active with a phone line, community library, coming out and other support groups. GLSS also started publishing a regular newsletter and in 1982 the first edition of their *Gay*

Times appeared.

Both GLCCS and GLSS were struggling to publish their respective newsletters and the editor of the Centre's newsletter, Stuart Davidson, and myself as editor of GLSS's newsletter decided there wasn't sufficient energy to publish two newsletters so we decided to join forces. A new name was needed to distinguish the new joint effort and after tossing numerous names around *Perceptions* was chosen. The new publication would provide "perceptions of life for gays and lesbians on the prairies." The first edition appeared in March of 1983.

Over the decade *Perceptions* continued to grow. Initially it had a Saskatoon focus but soon grew to become a Saskatchewan-focused publication. By the time the decade ended, it had grown from a eight-page newsletter printed on 8½ x 11 paper to the format used today.

At the time it was the only gay/lesbian publication on the prairies so it expanded its coverage to include all three prairie provinces. It still maintains the largest listing of queer organizations and businesses on the prairies. For many it remains an important link to the broader gay and lesbian community.

By the end of 1983 the GLCCS had closed its doors. A series of disasters had drained the small volunteer work force struggling to keep the group alive. A building caretaker had attempted to burn the centre down and a water pipe break had flooded the premises. These were the final straws and with income no longer keeping up with expenses the decision was made to close the doors. The assets were either sold or turned over to GLSS.

In 1982 the province took a turn towards the far right when the Progressive Conservative government of Grant Devine took office. They would turn out to be no friends of the gay and lesbian community. They were a right-wing ideological group determined to remake the province with their intolerant free-enterprise mentality. They would also turn out to be one of the most corrupt governments in the history of Canada, with many of them being charged with fraud and a few going to jail.

Cabinet Ministers regularly took potshots at any group they did not approve of and the gay and lesbian community was no exception. Social Services minister Grant Schmidt compared gays and lesbians to bankrobbers. In this climate, many gays and lesbians in the province lowered their profile. Many people, including myself, were blacklisted because they were seen as too left or too gay and did not fit with the intolerant attitudes represented by the Tories. Finding a job in the community sector,

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

heavily dependent on government grants, proved difficult for me.

At least I had more attention to devote to work on GAYMATES, a penpal-contact for gay men that I had started in the 1970s. GAYMATES provided a means for many gay men who lived in small centres or who didn't enjoy the commercial gay scene to connect with one another. While it never proved to be the money maker I had hoped, it did grow to include over 200 members from across Canada with a few in the United States and other countries. Some of the men who met through GAYMATES back in the '70s and '80s are still connected today.

Not everything disappeared in the '80s. Gays & Lesbians at the University of Saskatchewan (GLUS) had started on the university campus in the late '70s as the Gay Academic Union and provided a support system for students and staff on campus. Along with other groups, they organized and ran community dances out of the Ukrainian Hall at 20th Street and Avenue G. After Grant Schmidt's comparison of gays and lesbians to bank robbers, GLUS organized a dance they named the Bankrobbers Ball. The dance attracted a large crowd of male and female bankrobbers.

The fight for equality through changes in legislation also continued in the 1980s. A group of individuals in Saskatoon decided the community needed a new organization to fight for equality and fight against the repressive attitudes of the provincial Tories. The Coalition for Human Equality (CHE) was born and lobbying efforts were continued to bring about changes in human rights and other legislation that discriminated against gays and lesbians. CHE also functioned as a counter balance to the homophobia of the Tories and frequently spoke out against the regressive attitudes of the government. CHE lasted through the decade, with most of the energy eventually coming from Don McNamee who ended up devoting much of the last years of his life to lobbying the provincial government for equality.

As the decade began, rumours of a strange disease appearing in the United States and in some large Canadian cities surfaced. The mysterious disease killing gay men was initially labelled the "gay plague" and as more was understood about the disease it was renamed Gay Related Immune Deficiency or GRID. Medical science was initially baffled by the disease that appeared to only strike gay men.

Religious and political conservatives were quick to declare that this new "gay plague" was God's retribution for gay men's sinful lifestyle. Some called for all gay men to be rounded up and quarantined on some island in the middle of nowhere. Governments took little notice of the mounting epidemic as it appeared to affect only gay men. Their narrow world view blinded them to the epidemic that was growing in Africa and killing tens of thousands of heterosexual people.

As medical science learned more about this new illness, the virus that caused it—the Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV—was discovered and the related diseases caused by the virus were called Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The discovery that the virus could be transmitted through sexual

activity brought safer sex campaigns into the gay community. Suddenly the sexual liberation of the '70s seemed like a hollow victory as sex could now kill. The days of free love were over and gay men drastically changed their sexual habits, mostly out of fear. Abstinence and monogamy were now part of many gay men's lives.

In Saskatoon the community quickly recognized the peril posed by this new threat and GLSS put together a committee to look at a local response to the epidemic. The Red Cross approached members of the community to ask gay men to refrain from giving blood. Hemophiliacs were also contracting AIDS and gay men were frequently vilified as being responsible for spreading the epidemic and killing "innocent people."

The GLSS committee had heated discussions on how to address the growing peril in our community. Some thought the issues should be addressed in the context of the many other problems that caused the death of gay men and lesbians, such as suicide, substance abuse and mental illness. Others felt a new organization dedicated to this new disease was more appropriate as they felt that governments would not provide funding to gay organizations. The process of "degaying" the epidemic had begun.

The gay community was under attack over AIDS and many leaders blamed gay men for the deaths of non-gays resulting from the epidemic. Those in the gay community organizing to deal with the epidemic rightly claimed that AIDS wasn't a gay disease, with the result that resources often went to fighting the epidemic in segments of the population that weren't at as high a risk as gay men.

The first visible signs of the epidemic occurred when gay men, who had come out into Saskatoon's gay community in the '70s and moved on to larger centres, started to return to be around family when they died. The deaths started to mount and people started to get infected locally.

The energy that went into address HIV/AIDS had an effect on other groups like GLSS who went into a decline. By the mid '80s AIDS Saskatoon had come into existence and people's energy was transferred from other issues to AIDS. A small group of volunteers attempted to keep GLSS alive but eventually it declined to just a phone line answered a couple of nights per week and eventually it became merely a phone answering machine that dispensed information on the few activities and organizations in Saskatoon's queer community. Eventually GLSS folded and its few remaining assets were transferred to *Perceptions* who held on to the community library in the hopes that a new group would soon come into existence to address the other issues that impacted on gay men and lesbians.

The conservative pall of the times also caused gay men and lesbians to be fearful of being too visible. It was safer to retreat until the political climate changed. CHE continued to struggle with a few people lobbying the government for human rights protection, but nothing was likely to change as long as the Conservatives remained in power in Saskatchewan.

(Please see *Adventures* on page 10)

Adventures *(continued from page 5)*

As the 1980s came to a close, AIDS was still killing gay men in the community, although nationally the government had finally developed programs, with funding, to address the epidemic in Canada. In Saskatchewan the Conservative government chose to do nothing while gay men died. HIV/AIDS remained the central focus of the community through the last years of the decade.

Some of us were biding our time, waiting for an end to the conservatism that had swept the continent as well as the world. Greed was in and compassion and tolerance were out. The 1980s in many ways were the antithesis of the 1970s. The '70s had brought liberation, expansion and freedom. The '80s had brought death and retraction as the community tried to weather the siege of conservatism and AIDS. *P*



THE ADVENTURES OF A PRAIRIE FAG — PART 4

by Gens Hellquist

March 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of efforts to build a gay and lesbian community in Saskatoon. While there were small groups of gay men and other small groups of gay women going back at least to the 1920s, there were no organized initiatives to address the issues that affected gay people until the first formal queer organization was begun in March 1971.

It's important for us to be aware of where we have come from and how we got to where we are today. The lessons of the past can help guide our actions in the present and future. I have been part of the identified gay and lesbian community since I came out in 1965 at the tender age of 19 and have been involved in establishing organizations and services in the queer community since I helped found the first queer group in Saskatoon in 1971. This is also my 30th anniversary as a queer activist.

It has been a fascinating journey with times of sheer exhilaration and times of deep despair. I have had the honour and privilege to meet and work with hundreds of wonderful men and women, gay and non-gay, who have toiled to build a place where all queer people are valued and cherished.

This five-part series is a brief overview of my perceptions of Saskatoon's queer community. It is told through my eyes and others will have somewhat different stories to tell; stories seen through their eyes. However one sees the events and issues, we all have shared in the passions of carving out safe places for ourselves and our queer family.

As the 1990s dawned we were still living in conservative times where money, consumption and greed seemed to be acceptable motivators for governments and individuals. However, conservatism was starting to lose its lustre. George Bush, the Elder, seemed unable to continue the Hollywood screen play that was Ronald Reagan's presidency and the Iron Lady Margaret Thatcher's hold on Britannia was starting to fade. In Canada, Brian Mulroney was still Prime Minister, tossing out perks to his cronies and in Saskatchewan the Devine government was casting an unpleasant stench over the province. As government debt mounted under conservative rule, the ability of those conservatives to provide sound government and fiscal management started to be questioned. The excess of the Tories would eventually spell their demise as a political party in many parts of the country, leading to the formation on the Reform Party and the Saskatchewan Party. We can blame Mulroney for having to endure Stockwell Day.

In Saskatchewan, the queer community still remained largely hidden. The Devine government had proven to be incredibly

homophobic, so keeping one's head down was important for survival. As the most visible fag in the province, I found myself blacklisted by the Tories and employment in the human services sector was difficult to find throughout the '80s. I could be a liability for any organization that received funding from the province.

AIDS continued its relentless march. By the time the new decade began, numerous gay men in Saskatoon had already died from some form of opportunistic infections that were caused by HIV

and its suppression of the immune system. A number of gay men who'd migrated to the big city after their education was completed in Saskatoon began to return home to be near their family as they died. AIDS was often a quick and efficient killer.

AIDS organizations had appeared in the major prairies cities including Saskatoon and Regina but the epidemic often seemed overwhelming.

Their initial focus was on educating gay men about the epidemic and condom use. Increasingly their energy went into providing care and support for those who were dying. No one seemed to know how to slow the epidemic and we soon realized that a quick cure wasn't going to appear any day soon. AIDS was here for the long run.

Governments initially were slow to react to the epidemic. After all it was just gay men who were dying, with a few unfortunate 'innocent victims' who'd contracted the virus through blood infusions. The federal government developed a national AIDS strategy and provided some funding for AIDS organizations. Provincial governments were even slower to react. Eventually, provincial governments started to provide some funding to AIDS groups but they often seemed to be doing it to cover their ass—'can't lose votes on this one'—instead of aggressively addressing the issues. Unfortunately, the funding never kept up to the growing epidemic and federal funds remain at the same level after a decade, even though AIDS cases have doubled in Canada.

As the decade moved forward, new drugs were approved to treat the opportunistic infections that appeared after immune systems had been ravaged by HIV. As more was learned about the virus behind the epidemic and how it was transmitted, infection rates finally started to slow down. The epidemic started to appear in other populations beyond gay men and hemophiliacs who were the first to be hit. However, gay men in North America continued to be the largest group of people infected and dying from the disease.

(Continues on next page...)

As more people came out and were visible, attitudes began to change.

(Continued from previous page...)

By the end of the decade new treatments had been discovered that brought the disease under control for many gay men, although the drugs often had their own unpleasant side effects. However, gay men continued to become infected with HIV even though it had become clear how the virus was transmitted. My suspicions that factors like self-esteem and substance abuse complicated issues around transmission started to make sense to some people in the AIDS movement.

In 1990 Saskatoon had no visible queer organizations. Gays & Lesbians at the U of S (GLUS) was still operating but they primarily functioned as a social group on campus. There were a few small support groups formed around issues like religion and parenting and the Coalition for Human Equality was still functioning, although they had made little progress with the provincial Tories. Through my involvements on the board of AIDS Saskatoon I became aware of federal government money that perhaps could be accessed to start some type of gay community organization in Saskatoon.

In the fall of 1991 I met with a few individuals who had been involved in queer community groups over the past two decades. Our preliminary discussions with the regional population health branch of Health Canada gave us hope, so we quickly put together a new organization. Bylaws were written, an application for incorporation was sent to Regina and a grant application was sent to Health Canada. Gay and Lesbian Health Services of Saskatoon Inc. (GLHS) was born that fall. We secured a small grant that enabled us to begin a pilot project to look into the need for a queer organization in Saskatoon that would provide support groups and education around the lives of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

The two-year grant provided funding for two half-time positions and on November 15, 1991, Sheri McConnell and myself started our employment with GLHS. Our first task was to find an office to rent and locate furniture and supplies to operate that office. On January 2, 1992 GLHS opened its doors at 241 - 2nd Avenue S in downtown Saskatoon. The office was a dingy space on the third floor of an a largely uninhabited office building. The space was not unfamiliar to me as it had once housed a number of small community groups and I had been up a number of times during the '80s to talk to those groups about gay and lesbian issues. Those groups had moved on to bigger and better things. A lucky omen for us, I hoped.

GLHS held its first volunteer training session in early February that year and soon our Gay & Lesbian Line was up and operating. We also started Saskatoon's first queer youth group early that year and started to identify people who might be interested in forming a PFLAG group in Saskatoon. We ran a drop-in four nights a week and started the process of educating professionals and students about the many issues that impact on the health and wellness of queer people. We also provided community development by assisting groups like the Bridge City Chorus, gay/lesbian AA, and a group for female partners of gay and bisexual men to form.

As the '90s continued, GLHS experienced continual growth. As

conservative governments started to fall around the world, the pall of homophobia and intolerance started to lift somewhat and more people felt safe enough to make tentative steps out of their closet. GLHS's first two-year project grant ended and it had clearly shown that there was a need for a group that would address the emotional, physical, mental and spiritual health of gay men and lesbians. A second three-year grant was secured from Health Canada through the HIV/AIDS division. This one was for a rural outreach project—although we also used the grant to keep GLHS alive—that would attempt to establish support groups across the province. The only group that still exists from that project is Lambda North in Prince Albert, but they remain an active social and support group for queer people in that area of the province.

Eventually, GLHS grew beyond project status and the last project grant expired in 1996. For a few months in late 1996 and early 97 we were scrambling to find money to keep the dream alive. By February of 1997 GLHS was close to closing its doors. With the help of a couple PFLAG members, Kay Williams and Myrna Rolfes, we managed to secure core funding from Saskatchewan Health, providing a more solid base from which to operate.

The last decade has truly been one of queer liberation. The movement that began in the late 1960s achieved its largest advances in the fight for lesbian and gay equality during the '90s. With the election of more liberal governments, changes were made in human rights legislation to include protection for sexual orientation. In 1993 the recently elected NDP government added sexual orientation to human rights legislation and most other provinces followed suit. In Alberta, the courts ruled that sexual orientation must be "read into" legislation after the human rights laws were challenged by Delwin Vriend.

Little Sister's BookStore spent most of the decade in courts challenging Canada Customs' right to censor gay and lesbian material coming across the border. Other cases were fought and mostly won on issues that include spousal rights, employment, adoption and marriage. By the end of the decade life in Canada for gays, lesbians and bisexuals was vastly different.

As more people came out and were visible, attitudes began to change. It was difficult to believe the myths when people you cared about and loved disclosed that they were gay. The movement for equality now includes many non-gay people who recognize the injustice of the hate and lies.

Movies and television discovered gay characters were no longer the kiss of death and in some cases brought new audiences in. Advertisers discovered that we were a market willing to support those who supported us. Ground breaking shows like *Ellen* showed queer people in more positive lives and encouraged more people to come out. Gay and lesbian people and issues became cover stories on a wide range of magazines.

At GLHS we noticed an large upswing in calls and drop-ins after Ellen Degeneres came out in real life and on her television show. No longer was it just young white middle class people coming out but a wide range of the diverse group of people who see them-

(Please see *Adventures* on page 9)

Adventures *(continued from page 5)*

selves as lesbian, gay or bisexual. The work of queer organizations has expanded to address the myriad of issues associated with being queer and living in a homophobic society.

As the decade closed, the majority of the population supported gay and lesbian rights to varying degrees. Unfortunately, most gay people still do not feel able to come out and be themselves, frequently because there are still too few resources that provide support and safety on queer issues. However, 30 years of queer liberation have changed the world. *[2]*



THE ADVENTURES OF A PRAIRIE FAG — PART 5

by Gens Hellquist

March 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of the beginning of efforts to build a gay and lesbian community in Saskatoon. While there were small groups of gay men and other small groups of gay women going back at least to the 1920s, there were no organized initiatives to address the issues that affected gay people until the first formal queer organization was begun in March 1971.

It's important for us to be aware of where we have come from and how we got to where we are today. The lessons of the past can help guide our actions in the present and future. I have been part of the identified gay and lesbian community since I came out in 1965 at the tender age of 19 and have been involved in establishing organizations and services in the queer community since I helped found the first queer group in Saskatoon in 1971. This is also my 30th anniversary as a queer activist.

It has been a fascinating journey with times of sheer exhilaration and times of deep despair. I have had the honour and privilege to meet and work with hundreds of wonderful men and women, gay and non-gay, who have toiled to build a place where all queer people are valued and cherished.

This five-part series is a brief overview of my perceptions of Saskatoon's queer community. It is told through my eyes and others will have somewhat different stories to tell; stories seen through their eyes. However one sees the events and issues, we all have shared in the passions of carving out safe places for ourselves and our queer family.



The first 30 years of queer liberation have brought irrevocable change in the lives of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people. We have become visible and society finally recognizes our existence. We're here! We're queer! And some have got used to it.

The first years of this current millennium have seen us consolidate our gains. In most parts of the country our relationships have legal status comparable to the rights and responsibilities to which common-law couples are entitled. The battle for the right to marry continues, although it is by no means a goal many queer people aspire to.

Public opinion polls indicate the overwhelming majority of people in Canada support equality for queer people. The support may go up and down a few points depending on the specific issue that is being queried about. Even adoption by gays and lesbians is supported by a slight majority of Canadians.

As I look back on the past years of my life growing up and living

as a fag on the Canadian prairies, I have a good sense of where we have come from and the progress that we've made. When I first started having sex with other men I risked going to jail, although the thought of incarceration seldom crossed my mind while in the throws of passion. Meeting others who felt what I felt was difficult to do. The small communities of queer people were underground, only to surface when the police raided some bar or private party where unspeakable acts were being committed. We were headline fodder. Funny how some things never change.

*We're here!
We're queer!
And some have got used
to it.*

When I first realized that I was homosexual—and that revelation came only after checking the definition in a dictionary—I still felt alien. The definition in the dictionary didn't begin to encompass the depth of who I was. What I felt and believed inside didn't seem that alien, although I could find no validation in the world around me—no validation of what I felt and who I was. It

didn't make sense that I should feel so alone.

In many ways my life has been an effort to find validation, to find my family, my tribe. Eventually I realized that validation could only come from within myself but having a chosen family that believed in me enabled me to validate myself. I wasn't alone. There were others who felt like me and believed I was good.

Over the past thirty years of my involvement in the queer community I've had the opportunity to meet many incredible and brave people. People who stood up in the face of homophobia and said "I'm not going to take this shit any longer." Some I've fought along side in the trenches while others I romped around in bed with. Some are still part of my life but many have passed on to other cities or other planes.

Over the past decades we've been successful in our fight to end the systemic injustices that are part of our legal and justice systems. Laws that denied us access to the full benefits of society have largely been struck down. The few remaining ones will fall in the coming years. However, things are still not how they should be.

Homophobia is an insidious thing. It worms its way into the depths of our society and the depths of our souls. While the majority of Canadians support equality for gays and lesbians, I'm not so sure the majority would be happy with their child marrying one. It's OK for Mary and Sue next door to be queer but not in my family.

Homophobia is part of all of us, including queer people. On more
(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

than one occasion I've heard gay or lesbian parents say they wouldn't want their kids to grow up queer. "I want the best for my kid and being queer is so difficult." I'm not sure Aboriginal or Afro-Canadian parents would ever suggest they didn't want their kid to grow up Aboriginal or black, even though it can be difficult being either in a society where racism is endemic.

Frequently I hear someone in my tribe moan about the drag queens or leather men. "They reflect badly on all of us." Their actions in no way reflect badly on me or my tribe. Their actions are a reflection of the diversity of who they are rather than a reflection on me. The emphasis in my tribe on appearing like the dominant culture has me perplexed at times. I don't want to be like "them," even though all the "thems" appear rather diverse to me. All I ask is the right to explore who I am and what my potential is without being blocked by homophobia and heterosexism.

At times I fear the queer movement has been too successful at becoming like "them." I wonder if we haven't created a tribe much like the larger population where inequities are all too common. All too often the poor, disabled, non-white, non-middle class segments of our population are forgotten. The issues we fight for—marriage, spousal rights—don't have much value to people who are unable to escape the closet, let alone build a healthy relationship that could access our hard-won benefits. I believe it's important to fight for all those benefits but we must not leave other members of our tribe behind in our efforts to gain equality. It must be equality for all or it is meaningless.

While enormous changes have occurred in the lives of our tribe, there are many things that remain the same. We are still killing ourselves at much higher rates than the rest of society. We are still dying premature deaths from the ravages of substance abuse and AIDS is still killing us. The average life span for a queer person in Canada is 20 to 30 years less than it is for the general population. At the age of 54 I've probably surpassed that average life span. Homophobia is indeed killing us.

Our education system is still a breeding ground for homophobia and intolerance. Most kids starting school are open to all possibilities but the playground soon teaches them that certain people are higher up on the totem pole than others. Few teachers and institutions are willing to address homophobia in their classrooms or on the playground. Some would like to but fear they would have no backing from those higher up in that system. Those higher up in the system don't want to incur the wrath of some homophobic parent who doesn't want their child to be exposed to the diversity of the world.

One indication of the enormous change that has occurred is that kids as young as six are now labelling themselves gay. It makes sense to me that now the visibility of queer people is so high that kids are recognizing their different feelings and have a label to attach to it. When I was six I knew I was different, I just had no language to attach to what I felt.

However, there is great peril in kids that young being aware of

who they are when they have to begin their journey through an education system that doesn't acknowledge their existence and permits hate and intolerance to be so visible. What scars are they going to come out of that system with? The high rates of suicide in our youth will continue unabated unless we are able to change the education system to one of acceptance and tolerance that celebrates diversity. I know it's a stretch to ask our education system to address the real issues of real people.


Our health care system still remains largely unresponsive to our needs. If there was any other population that experienced the amount of health and social problems that our community does, governments and health bodies would be scrambling to find solutions to the problem. Unfortunately, our lives have little value in the current system. I've had numerous discussions with people in the health care system, including health ministers, who are unwilling to see and acknowledge the numerous issues our tribe deals with. The common response is that they have other priorities.

I still hear stories about medical staff standing in hospital hallways making disparaging remarks about the queer person in the room down the hall. It rarely occurs to medical personnel to think beyond their heterosexist assumption about the world they live in. And little wonder, as our medical education system rarely discusses our issues unless it's in relation to some disease. Wellness isn't a prime objective of our medical system at best and the wellness of queer people is on the bottom rung of the wellness ladder.

Our religious institutions still have enormous difficulty recognizing our lives. Some churches, like the United Church, have made strides in supporting queer people but they just scratch the surface. Homophobia is still an integral part of those institutions—just ask anyone who has been openly gay or lesbian in the ministry in the United Church. The majority of the ones I've known eventually leave the ministry because of the homophobia and the unwillingness to address it at fundamental levels. The Pope in Rome says it's not OK to discriminate against queer people yet the institution isn't prepared to formally recognize our existence, our lives and our loves. At a gut level they would just like for us to go away.

When do we go from here? True equality won't come until homophobia is eradicated. Now I realize that is an unrealistic goal that we may never attain but unless we keep that as our target, moving forward becomes difficult. The urge to settle back into our comfortable lives can be too inviting at times.

I don't claim to be a religious person in the traditional sense but one message that Christ gave that holds meaning for me goes something like: "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren you do unto me." Or to put it in my language, "Fuck with someone in my tribe and you fuck with me."

I'm looking forward to many more adventures as a prairie fag. The fight is far from over. 



THREE DECADES OF ACTIVISM

(Winnipeg) The Rainbow Resource Centre is celebrating a milestone this fall. It is the longest continually operating organization in Canada providing services to the queer community. While it has gone through a few name changes it has continued to bring queer activism to the Manitoba capital as well as the entire province. The important milestone will be celebrated November 3 with a 30th Birthday Gala.

The organization was established in 1971 as the Campus Gay Club at the University of Winnipeg. In 1973 it changed its name to Gays For Equality and began offering telephone peer counselling, referrals to supportive professionals and a lending library. At that time it was open five nights a week out of its offices in the Student Union Building.

In 1982 the organization moved off campus to the downtown to participate in the establishment of the Winnipeg Gay Community Centre and was incorporated the following year as the Manitoba Institute on Society and Sexuality Inc. In 1988 it moved to premises in the Osborne Village and became the Winnipeg Gay/Lesbian Resource Centre. In 1999 the name changed again and became the Rainbow Resource Centre in recognition of the growing diversity and breadth of Manitoba's queer communities.

The Centre has grown to where it now provides services to all of Manitoba and Northern Ontario. It is handling 16,000 service requests a year, ranging from peer counselling to requests for information. The Centre is host to a range of support groups including a free monthly legal clinic, AA and Alanon groups, and groups for youth, parents, religious issues, ethnic issues, film and immigration.

Over the past few years the Centre has provided extensive anti-homophobia training for health care providers, social-service workers, educators, guidance counsellors and school administrators. Over 2,000 professionals receive training from them each year.

It also houses the only lending library in Manitoba on queer issues and maintains a photographic, audio and written archives on the history of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals in Manitoba. It has become a one-stop clearing house for governments, institutions and the public when seeking information, advice or doing research on sexual orientation in Manitoba.

Their 30th Anniversary Gala is a semi-formal dinner and dance being held November 3 in the Crystal Ballroom of the Hotel Fort Garry. The evening features the MAGIC Awards by the Lambda Business and Professional Association of Winnipeg as well as a silent auction. The event will be hosted by internationally known comic Robin Tyler, a Winnipeg native, who will be flying in from Los Angeles for the event.

Attendance is limited to 300 for dinner and another 200 for the dance. Tickets are \$65 for the package and 25\$ for the dance. Tickets can be obtained by calling 204-474-0212, toll free 1-866-221-2960 or by e-mail at wglrc@escape.ca.

OUTLASTING THEM ALL

(Winnipeg) There must be something in the water in Winnipeg because it is the site of two of Canada's longest operating gay and lesbian organizations. Last month the Rainbow Resource Centre, formerly the Winnipeg Gay & Lesbian Resource Centre, celebrated its 30th anniversary and Happenings Social Club celebrated its 30th anniversary with a special members' appreciation night on October 7.

Happenings started as the Mutual Friendship Society and was incorporated in 1971. Their first permanent location was a former synagogue at 242 Manitoba Avenue where it was situated for ten years before moving to its current downtown location.

"The synagogue had a balcony and crystal chandeliers," said Benny Baumbick, who got the second membership issued by the group. "The queens loved it. They talked about the chandeliers and what lovely earrings they would make," he added.

Prior to the establishment of Happenings, Baumbick says there were regular socials. "We were floating from church basement to church basement, holding socials on a monthly basis," he says. "We had all sorts of 'engagement parties.' That's how we got our liquor permits."

Happenings currently has over 500 members and is the oldest continuously running gay and lesbian club in North America.

30 YEARS OF ACTIVISM

(Edmonton) The Gay & Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton (GLCCE) is celebrating their 30th anniversary this year. While the group has gone through names changes over the past 30 years, it has been one of the few groups in Canada to consistently remain in operation working to advance gay and lesbian liberation in Edmonton and the province.

GLCCE will also be celebrating their anniversary in a new home with the move taking place in early February and everything set up for operation by February 4. The Gay Men's Outreach Crew will also be moving to share the new space with GLCCE.

The new centre at #45 - 9912 - 106 Street will provide more meeting space for groups as well as a new cozy Resource Room with public access computers. The Centre will also be wheelchair accessible and they will be neighbours with other community groups like Planned Parenthood, the Edmonton Social Planning Council, The Family Centre and the Elizabeth Fry Society.

GLCCE will celebrate the opening of their new premises with an open house on Thursday February 28 from 3pm to 9pm. The phone number, fax number, P.O. Box and e-mail addresses will remain the same.

END OF AN ERA

(Winnipeg) North America's oldest, continuously running women's club has finally been forced to close their doors. Ms. Purdy's Club in Winnipeg has been facing financial difficulties for the past few years but finally reached the point where they could no longer operate with dwindling membership and attendance.

Sylvie Gelinass, one of the three remaining board members, said they had no other option but to close their doors. "We sent out messages after the last club meeting laying out the three things we needed to keep the place running," Gelinass said. "We asked for volunteers, we asked for new board members to come forward, and we asked that club members come out as patrons. None of these conditions were achieved, and so we have no choice but to close."

For the past few years the club has been going through a cycle of getting into debt, forcing staff layoffs until the debts are cleared up, then rehiring staff only to have to lay them off again. Recently the club was open only because one of the three board members would open it up. "We each chose a day to work and if one of us has to be out of town then its tough on the other two," Gelinass said.

The club closed its doors after holding an auction and sale of assets on August 31. "It was our place," said Maria, a newer patron of the club, "and now it'll be gone. I finally figured out that I liked girls there!"

The demise of the club is seen by many as a result of the growth of Winnipeg's gay and lesbian community where there are now many more options available for lesbians and gay men. "There are too many options and choices for lesbians. If the city was smaller, then the club would be more valuable," said Laura, a longtime member of the club.

EDUCATION / YOUTH

G.L.U.S. vs. U.S.	P1 (March/April 1983): 8
Edmonton Faggot	P16 [1985]: 8-9
U. of R. [Regina] Gays Organize	P37 (Dec. 1/87): 9
Gay Jeans	P47 (March 1/89): 4
Gay Youth Surveyed	P54 (Jan. 17/90): 7-8
U of A [Alberta] Awareness Week	P55 (Feb. 28/90): 11 and P55 [i.e., 56] (April 11/90): 10
Award Questioned [President's Medal award, University of Saskatchewan]	P55 [i.e., 56] (April 11/90): 10-11
Young Lesbians & Gays	P64 (April 24/91): 4-6
Campus Uproar	P65 (June 12/91): 12
Gay Studies	P66 (Aug. 14/91): 8
Thanks Peter [Millard]	P69 (Dec. 18/91): 5-6
Condoms at School	P71 (March 18/92): 12
Students Lose	P72 (April 29/92): 10
AIDS Claims Doug Wilson	P76 (Oct. 28/92): 10
Discrimination against Gay Men & Lesbians in Saskatchewan	P85 (Dec. 8/93): 8-9
From Where I Sit [HIV/AIDS education in Saskatchewan schools]	P103 (March 13/96): 5
Dealing with Suicide	P106 (July 24/96): 14
Gay Studies at U of S	P110 (Jan. 29/97): 10
AIDS on School Curriculum [Saskatchewan]	P110 (Jan. 29/97): 10
Intolerance Banned [Calgary]	P111 (March 12/97): 10
Under Attack [concerning article in University of Regina student newspaper]	P116 (Oct. 22/97): 11
Banning Books [Calgary Public School Board]	P117 (Dec. 3/97): 11
Educating Teachers [Safe School Project, Saskatoon]	P119 (March 18/98): 9
Breaking the Silence conferences, University of Saskatchewan – some sample reports:	P120 (April 29/98): 19
Breaking the Silence [first annual]	P128 (April 21/99): 14
Conference a Success [second annual]	P136 (April 19/00): 10
Breaking the Silence [third annual]	P152 (April 24/02): 13
Silence – Breaking Successful [fifth]	

(continued on next page)

Twins Speak [Winnipeg]	P122 (July 29/98): 14
The Death of Matthew Shepard [concerning homophobia in Saskatchewan schools]	P124 (Oct. 28/98): 5
Queers in the Schools	P127 (March 10/99): 8
The Latest Battleground [the education system]	P128 (March 10/99): 7-8
School Board Furore [and] Teaching Teachers [homophobia in Winnipeg school system]	P128 (April 21/99): 13 [and] P136 (April 19/00): 19
Same-sex Benefits [resolution of Saskatchewan Teachers Federation]	P128 (April 21/99): 14
Meanwhile, in Saskatoon... [question of addressing homophobia in schools]	P133 (Dec. 8/99): 19
Editorial [describing visit by two members of Gay & Lesbian Health Services, Saskatoon, to a rural school]	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 3
Classroom Closet [concerning a lesbian teacher in Winnipeg]	P140 (Oct. 25/00): 19
Supporting Our Youth [Saskatoon's Safe School Project and Gay-Straight Alliance plans]	P141 (Dec. 6/00): 12
Teaching OK, Adopting Not [poll of Saskatchewan residents]	P142 (Jan. 31/01): 11
Building Alliances [Red Deer, Alberta]	P145 (June 6/01): 19
Safe Residence [called for at University of Saskatchewan]	P148 (Oct. 24/01): 12
Editorial [concerning queer youth suicide]	P154 (July 31/02): 3
How Much Are the Times A-Changing?	P156 (Oct. 23/02): 6

Two related items, in the **POLITICS AND JUSTICE** chapter, give the story of discrimination in the education system against Delwin Vriend. These are titled:

“An Interview with Delwin Vriend”
and “Ha, Ha, I Win!”

G.L.U.S. VS. U.S.

GLUS faces one of the age-old problems which have chipped away at the solidity of any campus upfront organization.... future career jeopardy.

Several off - campus parties have been held which have drawn a considerable number of gay students and have proven to be quite successful. Unfortunately, yet understandably, when the social activity is moved onto campus, the attendance shrinks to a number of individuals too minimal to maintain any kind of solid organization.

Could you put the money and time invested, let alone your complete future, on the line for a cause? Thanks to the wonderfully archaic and fascist attitude of the governing bodies of the U. of S., that is exactly what you would be doing. If you were a student of medicine or law you could kiss your future good-bye and look for work in the wonderful world of fast foods, were you to stand up and be noticed.

The U. of S. has always been against any upfront organization. Unfortunately, it boils down to not only the "Gay VS. Straight" conflict, but to the challenge of authority -- something that cannot be tolerated by our governing fathers.

This, according to Peter Millard, long-time campus activist, is the basic problem behind maintaining a good, solid, on-campus organization. However, GLUS continues to be a small light in the shadows of constricting hierarchy and hopefully one day, through strength and perserverance, will grow to a light too strong to be ignored or suppressed.

EDMONTON FAGGOT

A few weeks ago (May 26), CTV's documentary program, W-5, aired a segment called "A Not So Gay World." Over the music of Bronski Beat, Helen Hutchinson introduced her story about Ian Paterson, 18, an Edmonton high school student who has been challenging the conventions of high school self-expression.

Last year, Paterson caused a stir in Harry Ainlay Composite High School by having his poem, "High School Faggot" (q.v.) published in the school literary paper. He incurred verbal and even physical abuse from some students, and gained the confidence of others, but received little support from the school authorities. This spring, Paterson again became a controversial figure when, for the school yearbook, he submitted as part of his life ambitions his wish to "settle down in a quiet suburb with a tall, rich, hunky man with a bushy moustache."

The editor of the yearbook, a teacher, found the submission offensive and substituted Paterson's description with "a tall, rich companion." The principal of the school sided with the editor in the ensuing dispute. Paterson then collected 376 signatures on his behalf from the student body of 2800. The petition was sent to the Edmonton Public School Board, but the board has so far backed the school. Paterson feels that whether or not he gets his way with the school board, the issue has engendered worthwhile discussion among the students about freedom of expression and gay rights.

What was especially engaging about the W-5 presentation were the casual interviews with other students at the school. Some students

were most supportive of Paterson, seeing his kind of challenge as necessary for greater freedom for gays. Other students, however, were somewhat more conservative in their appraisals of the issue, saying that he should not "inflict" his homosexuality on the larger student body; that the school is only "getting a bad name" from the publicity; that he's just out to make a name for himself; that in being so vocal, he is asking for trouble and should expect it; that although he has his rights, "the faggots in other schools aren't causing all these problems"; and simply, that being gay is "just not right."

In another interview, Dick Baker of the Edmonton Public School Board offered some obfuscations in support of the teacher's editing. He cautioned that homosexuality is a "sensitive issue," and that schools must "reflect community standards." As well, he said that it was the duty of the school system to "protect" students like Paterson, a protection that extends to warning him not to publicize his sexual orientation. More progressively, Marlene Antonia, head of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, suggested that Paterson was probably being illegally discriminated against by the school board. She insisted that cases like this could be defended under the provisions of Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To have had the thoughts of Paterson's family presented, would have been most interesting. His family, however, was not mentioned at all in the W-5 segment (or in related articles in The Body Politic, May, 1985). One supposes that they may have preferred to avoid the publicity.

Ian Paterson's willingness to risk his peer support in favor of gay visibility in his school is a piquant example of homespun heroism. The producers of W-5 have documented it with commendable creativity and sympathy.

B.R.

High School Faggot

A usual --
cold,
unfriendly --
school never changes,
nor the people.
Jocks,
Heads,
Rockers,
Always verbally,
sometimes physically
abusive.
Homo,
Faggot,
Queer --
that's what they call me
everyday,
all day.
No one cares for my feelings,
they're blinded
by hate;
by homophobia.
Why can't they accept me
for who --
and what I am --
a person
with thoughts
with feelings
with emotions.
But I'll survive.
I'll read my books,
Give my views and opinions,
Wear my pink triangle
and be proud of who,
and what I am --
a male homosexual;
but most important
I am --
a Person.

U. OF R. GAYS ORGANIZE

Tuesday 20 October 1987 marks the date that six University of Regina students met to formally declare the existence of the Regina Students Homophile Society, Inc. as a University of Regina gay and lesbian support group.

From 1973 to 1980 a similar organization existed at the U. of R. that was known as the University of Regina Homophile Association, but unfortunately none of its records survived to act as a guide to the founders of the new society. One of the founders had the organization incorporated on 15 May 1987 under the Saskatchewan Non-Profit Corporations Act in order to give the new society a firm legal status and to ensure that proper records would be kept. During that spring, summer and early fall donations were collected from various individual members of the Regina gay community and the Gay Community of Regina Society (GCR) to help pay for start up costs.

On 24 June 1987 a constitution, based on the principals set out under the Non-Profit Corporations Act and the constitution of Gays & Lesbians at the U of S (GLUS), was enacted and a provisional board of directors consisting of a president and a secretary/treasurer was established. In September the Treasurer of GLUS was interviewed and kindly gave the Regina society social and financial information on his group that RSHS could use as a guide. On October 14 the Students' Union of the U. of R. formally recognised the Society as a campus organization, thus entitling the Society to grant money and free usage of campus facilities.

Future plans include electing a full board of directors for the 1987-88 year, planning

a range of activities for the year and submitting a budget to the Students' Union.

Membership in RSHS is open to all gay, lesbian and bisexual students, faculty and staff at the U. of R. Membership dues are \$3.00 a year. A weekly meeting and drop-in is held every Tuesday evening at 7:30 pm at the Women's Centre, Student Union Building, Main Campus, U of R (subject to change, phone 584-1411 or 522-7343 for confirmation). The mailing address for the group is P.O. Box 3382, Regina, Sask., S4P 3H1.

Darrel D. Hockley

GAY JEANS

Homophobia appears to be alive and well on the University of Saskatchewan campus in Saskatoon. Gays and Lesbians at the U of S (GLUS) sponsored a gay and lesbian awareness week Feb. 6 to 10. The week included a series of films and videos with lesbian and gay themes as well as a forum. Friday February 10 was declared blue jeans day and people were encouraged to wear blue jeans to show their support for lesbians and gays.

Naming a day as blue jeans day, as a means of drawing attention to the fact that lesbians and gays are an integral part of society, has been tried at numerous campuses across North America for years. It has also been done at the U of S before but this year's blue jean day sparked more attention and controversy than it has in the past. At least a couple of radio stations ran the story prominently in their newscasts all day and the local paper, the Star-Phoenix, ran articles on blue jean day.

Many students forewent their traditional blue jeans on blue jeans day and donned sweats or dress pants. One agriculture student wore shorts in the minus 10 C weather lest he be mistaken as gay. An education student was quoted in the Star-Phoenix as saying, "It's not really accepted in society" (being gay I assume, not wearing blue jeans). She didn't wear blue jeans as she usually does "because I'm not a lesbian."

Others were stronger in their opposition to gays and lesbians and a crowd gathered around to watch as two pairs of jeans were set on fire.

"I don't understand why straight people are so uptight about it,"

said Peter Millard, a professor on campus and spokesman for GLUS. Millard said he did notice fewer jeans on campus and such negative reactions provides an indication of the oppressive attitudes faced by lesbians and gays. "They obviously have a deep-seated insecurity, because why else would it bother them."

Some students were supportive of gays and lesbians and thought choosing jeans was "kind of a neat way" for GLUS to make a point. "Gays are the people you see in blue jeans all the time and you just don't know," said one student. Others thought it was a good way to show that gays and lesbians are normal.

GENS HELLQUIST

GAY YOUTH SURVEYED

(Winnipeg) The results of the first survey in Canada to determine and document the needs of lesbian and gay youth has been released. The survey, undertaken by the Gay and Lesbian Youth Services Network (GLYSN), is a project of the Village Clinic in Winnipeg and produced some disturbing results. The survey involved interviews with 45 gay and lesbian youth and 42 health care professionals and was funded by the Winnipeg Core Area Initiatives and the Manitoba Services Council.

The lesbian and gay youths interviewed were mostly residents of the core area of Winnipeg and ranged from the ages of 14 to 21. They were interviewed either in person, through focus groups or by telephone. The professionals interviewed were chosen from referrals from GLYSN, referrals from the youths interviewed or were selected by the interviewers on the basis of who most likely would have experienced working with gay and lesbian youth and provided services in the core area.

The survey provided ample evidence that being a gay or lesbian youth was a perilous situation. Over half of the respondents reported being subjected to verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation with a few stating they had been physically assaulted. Other forms of discrimination were also reported by nearly half of the youths surveyed.

Nearly two-thirds of the youths indicated they had considered suicide at some point in their life and one-quarter had attempted suicide. Of those who had attempted or contemplated suicide, three-quarters indicated that be-

ing gay or lesbian was a factor in the suicidal thoughts; other reasons cited were relationship problems, drug and alcohol problems and prostitution. The survey recommended that the high incidence of suicide attempts among gay and lesbian youth must be addressed. Other studies have suggested that up to 30% of teen suicides are by gay and lesbian teens.

Many of the youths reported problems in the educational system. One student claimed he was "found out" by his school while another stated that the students petitioned to have him expelled. Thirty-five percent reported that teachers had made negative remarks about homosexuality and 85% indicated that other students made such remarks. The average age that the youths realized they might be gay or lesbian was 12 and most of them wished that more had been taught in school about homosexuality including that homosexuality exists and that it is a normal part of life. They also wanted more information on coming out, AIDS and resources where they could get more accurate information. The report recommended that a positive perspective about homosexuality be integrated into the school curriculum for all students at the junior and senior high level. The report also recommended that information about gay/lesbian resources and services be readily available in junior and senior high schools.

A serious lack of support systems for gay and lesbian youth was evident throughout much of the report. Gay and lesbian organizations are often reluctant to work with gay and lesbian youth because

of concerns about the law and clubs, bars, baths, etc. are not usually accessible to people under the legal drinking age. Parents were often not a source of support for the youths. Only a third of the respondents' parents knew and of those only 44% were supportive and understanding. One reported being kicked out of the home and two reported that they had been physically abused by their parents. The largest means of support for them was other gay friends which therefore leaves those youths who have not connected with the gay and lesbian community with little or no means of support.

The most common concerns expressed by the youths interviewed were about AIDS and safe sex; other concerns were about the negative attitudes of others and about violence. Almost a third of the respondents had been forced to have sex with someone at some point in their life. Two-thirds of those being abused were males. The ages at which they had been assaulted ranged from 3 to 19 and occurred up to three different times. Family members, family friends and acquaintances were the majority of the perpetrators of the forced sexual assaults.

Most of the youths felt that a Safe House where they could get away from the violence was important. They also strongly endorsed the need for a library with accurate information on homosexuality, counselling services directed at gay and lesbian youth as well as peer counseling services and a gay and lesbian group home. They also

continued on page 8

wished that there was more positive information about gays and lesbians in school so that they would not feel so alone and to also teach those around them acceptance and tolerance.

The professionals who were interviewed for the survey varied substantially in their responses to the needs of gay and lesbian youth. Those who were referred by GYSLN or by the youths in the study were much more likely to be supportive of the needs of gay and lesbian youth and support the idea drop-in centres, group homes and safe houses. Those respondents interviewed from the community at large were considerably less likely to be supportive of services for gay and lesbian youth. Several agencies and individuals contacted for the survey refused to participate. The survey does not mention what percentage of professionals who come into contact with youth were supportive or non-supportive of gay or lesbian youth.

Most of the professionals interviewed acknowledged that there was prejudice in their profession towards homosexuality. Less than a third of the organizations they worked for had a philosophy regarding working with gay men and lesbians. Most also agreed that the concerns of gay and lesbian youth were not being adequately addressed. The report recommended that the professional community work with GYSLN to develop a strategy to increase the awareness of the needs of gay and lesbian youth within government agencies that are mandated to work with youth. It also recommended that appropriate resources be developed for educators and school counselors.

Being a teenager is never easy for anyone. It is a time in life when

issues of self-esteem and self-acceptance are being wrestled with. The problems associated with changing from a dependent person to a fully functioning independent human being are in the fore. The need to be accepted by parents, family, friends and peers which often dominates the concerns of teens is complicated by being gay or lesbian or being different. The resources to help gay and lesbian teens through this difficult period are usually lacking. This study once again shows the difficulties of growing up gay or lesbian in our society. It clearly points out the need for resources to help teens develop into self-confident gay and lesbian adults.

U OF A AWARENESS WEEK

(Edmonton) GALOC, the lesbian and gay club of the University of Alberta, is holding Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week March 12-18, 1990. With 15 events in seven days, this year's activities are the most ambitious in the six-year history of the club. Gays And Lesbians On Campus is a group of students serving the University's lesbian and gay population in a social, supportive and safe manner, and the University community as a whole in the areas of raising awareness of gay and lesbian issues as an advocacy group for individuals experiencing either blatant or subtle homophobia.

Membership is open to anyone, but voting privileges are restricted to members of the U of A's student body, staff or faculty. At present there are about seventy members and a full executive. In addition to GALA Week, GALOC has held three successful socials, Edmonton's first International Lesbian Week events and a discussion group meets every second Tuesday. They also have a fairly extensive periodical collection in their office in the Student's Union Building. Over the last four months the executive has been busy tidying up loose ends from previous years, including designing and printing new letterhead, solidifying contacts within Edmonton's gay community and also reestablishing the club's mailing list to other campus groups. They have also begun to work constructively with the Student's Union, which has recently agreed to publicly support GALA Week '90.

Their hope is that these activities will at least raise awareness and dialogue both on and off campus and, at most, garner support for the battle to include sexual orientation as a valid grounds for discrimination in Alberta's Individuals Rights Protection Act.

(Edmonton) The University of Alberta campus was the setting for a successful slate of programming and events designed to heighten awareness of lesbian and gay issues March 12th-18th. Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week was sponsored by Gays and Lesbians on Campus, the culmination of months of planning and preparation.

The various events staged during the week elicited responses ranging from tolerance and open-mindedness to extreme homophobia. The "Pink Triangle Supplement" to the Gateway enlightened many and incensed one psychology student, Mark Lang, to contact the Edmonton Sun to voice his protest. He objected strongly to the "Heterosexual Questionnaire" in the supplement, which asked straights many of the questions lesbian and gay people have been queried about for so long, including "Have you considered aversion therapy?" "It's not going to promote awareness of homosexuality, it's just going to promote more ridicule," said Lang.

The most controversial, and thus effective, component of Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week was Blue Jean Day, March 15th. Borrowing the tradition from Gays and Lesbians at the University of Saskatchewan, GALOC blitzed campus with posters encouraging all gay and lesbian people and gay-positive people to wear their blue jeans as a sign of support for gay rights.

Hugh Babowal, a fourth-year Arts student, protested the day by selling T-shirts which showed two stick men holding hands with an "H" over them. He sold eight T-shirts to friends who wore them on March 15th. Other protests, such as a "Heterosexual Awareness Table and posters saying "Boot the Fruit" and "Bag a Fag", marked the day. Said Babowal: "If they want to do something, wear pink armbands or hats, but don't use my jeans. By making it blatant, they lost any support they had."

AWARD QUESTIONED

(Saskatoon) Some troubling questions have been raised over the awarding of the prestigious President's Medal at the University of Saskatchewan. Each year the award is given to the top undergraduate at fall convocation. The university's awards bulletin states that the medal is given to the most distinguished undergraduate of the year taking into consideration both scholarship and leadership. Scholarship is to be given three times the value of leadership in consideration for the award which is decided by an awards and scholarship committee.

This year's award was given to Cyprian Enweani who represented Canada at the last Olympics and is active in local anti-drug campaigns. Enweani graduated with a grade point average of 74 while the runner-up, Lynn McLeod, had an average 12 points higher. Subcommittee chair, Professor Ivo Lambi, resigned his position on the awards subcommittee because he felt that the award was given without proper consideration of academic achievement.

Others on campus feel there are other reasons for McLeod not being awarded the medal. McLeod listed on her application her involvement in the gay and lesbian community and some feel that involvement was what denied her the medal. Peter Millard, head of the English Department, is one of those who believes McLeod's involvement in the

gay/lesbian community was a factor in her not being awarded the medal. According to Millard, the subcommittee simply selected the wrong person.

The controversy has caused the Academics Awards Committee to make some changes in the way decisions are made in the awarding of future President's Medals. University Council directed the subcommittee to clarify its criteria for awarding the medal and to review its operating procedures.

McLeod wonders why, if nothing had gone wrong in the awarding of the medal, changes were made in the process of selecting future medal winners.

YOUNG LESBIANS & GAYS

In the last issue of PERCEPTIONS I wrote about the early days of organizing a lesbian and gay community in Saskatoon and my experiences of growing up in Saskatoon before development of any organized gay and lesbian community. While writing the article I was forced to recall my own days as a teenager and the pain I experienced growing up thinking I was the only gay person in Saskatoon. I remember feeling alone because there was no place I could go to get information or no one I trusted to talk about what I was feeling. As I remembered those teen years, and it has been a while, I wondered how much things have changed for gay and lesbian youth. I know things have changed for me and that our community has grown and become stronger but has the situation for lesbian and gay teens changed all that much?

Our society would like to ignore the fact that gay and lesbian teens exist and to a large extent so does the lesbian and gay community. We've developed our comfortable niches and ways to survive in a world that would prefer us to be hidden and we avoid thinking about lesbian and gay youth.

I'm not sure any of us really escape the turmoil we experienced as lesbian and gay teens as it affects us all in some way. Some are luckier than others and don't fall victim to substance abuse, suicide or mental illness but are affected by being denied the opportunity to grow with our feelings in a natural way. While non-gay teens are allowed to work their way through their feelings and find themselves we are forced to suppress and hide that most important part of our being, who we choose to love and build our primary relationships with.

I had hoped that after more than two decades of fighting for our rights that things had changed for lesbian and gay youth but I was forced to reconsider that when I met Mark. I often advertise my counselling business in the local classifieds and late one afternoon I received a call from Mark. He wanted to know about the services that I offered. I explained that I provided counselling for gay men and lesbians on a range of issues including coming out. He said he was interested in coming out but as he was only 16 and in high school he didn't think he could afford to pay me. I set up an appointment with him anyways. He didn't have any other resources to talk about his gay feelings.

It was a bitterly cold winter afternoon but Mark showed up for his appointment fifteen minutes early. It was obvious that he was apprehensive as well as excited. As we sat and talked I was impressed with how this 16 year old was so clear about being gay and so comfortable with it. Maybe things have changed since I was 16. The biggest problem was that there was no one that he could talk with about his feelings. He wanted to meet other people his age who he could share his feelings with and be friends with without having to worry about rejection. He had known for about a year that he was gay and had gone to talk to his guidance counsellor. The discussion had been framed in the context that he was worried about a friend who was gay. The counsellor at his Catholic high school suggested that he inform his friend that it was not OK to be gay. What more could he expect from a school that still tells students that masturbation is a sin. Mark was relieved to hear me say that I didn't think there was anything wrong with him

masturbating while thinking about other men. Mark didn't talk with that counsellor at his school again. He had decided that it would be better if he kept things hidden at school.

He had numerous questions about being gay, sex, meeting other people, AIDS, etc. which I answered. Many of the questions indicated that he had been listening to the many myths and lies and had begun to believe them to some degree even though he had difficulty seeing himself in terms of the myths and lies.

In the school that Mark attends there are over 1,000 students but none that Mark knows or suspects of being gay or lesbian. I gave him information on Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community but he didn't see anything that was for him. He is too young for the club scene and the few groups in existence didn't appeal to him. He wanted to meet other gays his age but Saskatoon has no youth group. I gave him a list of books that he could find in the public library to give him more information about living gay. I also gave him addresses of youth groups in other cities but he was concerned about mail going to his home. When the meeting ended I felt I hadn't been able to offer Mark much other than the knowledge that he wasn't the only gay person in Saskatoon and the possibility that he would have to shelve his gay feelings for a couple of years.

Mark called a couple of weeks later and we arranged another meeting. It soon became clear that Mark was impatient. He knew he was gay, felt good about himself and wanted to get on with meeting others like himself. I promised to see if I could locate other gay

and lesbian teens in Saskatoon. After running an article in PERCEPTIONS about getting a youth group going and asking if they knew of any gay and lesbian teens, I had to inform Mark that I hadn't had any success. I know that Mark isn't the only gay teen in Saskatoon but I don't know how to connect him with others or how to make his school years any more comfortable for him as a gay teen. Maybe things haven't changed all that much in the 28 years since I was 16 and trying to come out.

Was Saskatoon unique or was the situation similar in other cities? I located the names and phone numbers of some young lesbians and gay men in other cities and called them.

My first contact was Keenan from Edmonton. Keenan is 16 and appears to be lucky in that he attends a fine art high school where the atmosphere is more open about lesbians and gays. He knows at least 10 other students at school who are gay or lesbian. Initially he found coming out difficult but as he has learned more about himself his fears of rejection have lessened and as he has met others to talk with, coming out has become easier. Discovering that family and friends didn't reject him when he came out to them was important in feeling better about his sexuality. Keenan informed me about a friend who was willing to be interviewed.

Simone is 18 and attends the same high school as Keenan. She has not found it too difficult to be out at school and has received support from teachers and guidance counsellors. The most difficult thing for her is meeting potential partners. With most lesbians her age still in the closet, her chances of meeting people to develop relationships with is few. Simone volunteers as a peer counsellor at school and has met other les-

bians and gays when counsellors referred people to talk with her. She recommends that other lesbians and gays in high school keep working at coming out and says things do get better. Maybe things have improved substantially for lesbian and gay teens.

My next call was to GAYLINE in Calgary as I knew the youth group was meeting there that night. I spoke with Adam who was at the meeting. Adam is 24 and has been out of high school for a few years but still remembers the pain of being gay in school. He was too scared to come out in high school and while there were others he suspected of being gay he knew no one who he could talk to about his feelings. His frustrations of feeling alone led him to attempt suicide. He was saved only when a friend discovered him after he had swallowed pills and consumed a large amount of vodka. His friend got him to the hospital in time. He heard nothing at high school about homosexuality other than the vicious lies and myths and didn't feel he could talk to his guidance counsellor. Without information and support he was unable to come out until after he left high school. He recommended that others in high school should contact a gay and lesbian youth group if there was one in their city or to find one in another city and make contact.

The teen years can be difficult at the best of times. It's a time of life when new feelings are bubbling to the surface and struggles are going on to discover oneself and become an independent person. For gay and lesbian teens those problems are magnified many fold. Some of those feelings bubbling up are not seen as acceptable so the struggle begins to suppress and hide those feelings.

The results of that suppression can be disastrous. Teen suicide

is a serious problem and the rate of attempted and successful suicides with lesbian and gay teens is three times as high as with non-gay teens. Adam's story is just one of many. Teen suicide is being openly talked about now but I have yet to hear the topic of gay and lesbian teen suicides come up in any of the debates or discussions. Once again lesbian and gay teens are made invisible.

The gay and lesbian community hasn't been very supportive of young gays and lesbians either. Both Adam and Keenan talked about experiences when older gay men didn't take them seriously and only saw them as sexual objects because they were 'young and naive'. One of Adam's first experiences when he was coming out was being raped. Simone felt that she hadn't been treated as a sex object in the same way that Keenan and Adam had but she did say that when she attended women's dances in Edmonton she didn't feel comfortable with the older lesbians. All three said they had felt discounted at times because of their age. Adam added that the youth group in Calgary had gotten a lot of support from other gay and lesbian groups in the city.

Most of us have memories of painful experiences of being lesbian or gay in high school. Few of us were as fortunate as Keenan and Simone to attend a school where support could be obtained from teachers and guidance counsellors. Many of us never really escape the pain, frustration and feelings of loneliness and have resorted to various ways of masking that pain, including alcohol and drugs. Some never live through their teens. Yet as a community I don't see much concern about changing things for lesbian and gay teens.

I'm well aware of the lies that abound in our society about seduc-

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

tions and recruitment and have allowed myself to be scared off by those lies at times. We know they're lies yet we allow them to survive with our refusal to speak out against them and our failure to fight for the rights of gay and lesbian teens. Why should we have to put our feelings and our lives on hold because some prefer to

believe lies rather than face the truth? Non-gay teens have a wealth of support systems that provide them with options to deal with the complexities of growing up. Gay and lesbian teens have few if any and seldom can they turn to our community for support.

Most gay and lesbian teens do not have the luxury of attending an enlightened school like the one

Keenan and Simone attend. Most do not live in cities with youth groups. Can we ever claim to have won our rights until gay and lesbian youth are allowed to get the facts and deal with their feelings when they first surface? Those lesbian and gay youth are our future. Can we afford to leave them to the homophobes who would deny them the right to be who they are? I don't think we can.

CAMPUS UPROAR

(Regina) The printing of a safer sex article for gay men in campus newspapers across Canada continues to create an uproar. The article, which appeared originally in The Muse, the student paper at Memorial University in St. John's, used explicit language to discuss safer sex and was accompanied by a graphic of one naked man on his knees in front of another. Police in some cities where the article appeared investigated laying obscenity charges while at other universities the resignation of the student paper's staff was called for.

At the University of Regina an uproar ensued when the collective of the student paper, The Carillon, decided not to run the article which had been distributed across Canada by the Canadian University Press. Collective members voted March 14 not to run the article because they felt it belonged in a special sexuality supplement which they decided not to print this year. In a CBC Radio interview, Carillon General Coordinator Darcy Finick said the supplement wasn't being printed because of a lack of resources and because there wasn't a visible gay, lesbian and bisexual community on campus to warrant such a supplement.

The uproar continued in high gear for a month. The Regina media entered the picture and a Regina Leader-Post article quoted Nils Clausson, executive director of AIDS Regina, as saying that the decision not to print the article was "the result of stupidity, ignorance and a great deal of homophobia." He said the paper was unwittingly helping to spread AIDS by its refusal to run the article. The Carillon claimed that the media had confused their statements about the article with their statement about the supplement.

Student papers across Canada learned about the situation and expressed their displeasure with the Carillon collective. Some collective members, including Adonica Huggins, who is also co-ordinator of the U of R Women's Centre, pressured the collective to print a supplement and apologize for their "homophobic" decision and statements. Adonica also attempted to arrange an educational on gay and lesbian issues for the collective but they weren't interested.

On March 28 the collective published an apology in the paper. They claimed not to be homophobic but merely short of volunteers and caught up with exams. They did confess to being "by and large inconsiderate and demeaning," which they hadn't intended to be. They also agreed to run a lesbian and gay supplement if volunteers could be found to produce the eight pages of copy.

The supplement was slated for publication on April 11. A dozen volunteers worked up to 15½ hours preparing copy for the supplement. Two days before it was to appear in print the collective delayed its publication saying the Easter weekend had prevented them from producing other general copy for the issue and that no issue would be printed that week. Again the recriminations flew with accusations being made that the delay was because of the collective's discomfort with lesbian and gay issues and stories circulated that the supplement had been killed.

The lesbian/gay/bisexual supplement finally made it into print in the last issue of this term, April 11. The eight-page supplement contains a variety of stories on various gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. One article about the uproar was moved from the supplement to the opinion section of the paper because the Carillon collective felt it was an opinion instead of an article. The front

page of the issue contained a list of ten topics that couldn't be covered on the front page because "Due to demand of a peculiar nature, none of these items could appear on the front page." A Point and Counterpoint debate between opposite sides of the issues within the collective also appeared on the front page. Inside, a year end photo of collective members was titled "Homophobes pause for photo".

NEWS —

GAY STUDIES

(Saskatoon) The fall term at the University of Saskatchewan will see a new class added to the graduate studies courses offered by the Department of English.

The course, English 898.3, will examine homosexuality and literature. It will be taught by Peter Millard, a long-time gay activist, who is head of the English Department at the University. The course will differ from most in that it will deal with the process of development of social attitudes as they relate to gay literature, rather than simply deconstruction of the texts themselves. This will provide an important social dimension to a subject that most people are uncomfortable with.

The course will survey the history of social attitudes towards homosexuality and lead on from there to the roots of gender concept, repression, and the prevalence of patriarchal and heterosexist attitudes in our society. The course will be an attempt to rescue the subject from the past and thereby bring it out into the open.

According to Millard, there has been a great deal of interest in the course both from within the department and from students studying sociology and psychology.

This is the first gay studies course offered by the University of Saskatchewan.

THANKS PETER

Gens Hellquist

Saskatoon is about to lose one of its long-time gay and lesbian rights activists. Peter Millard plans to retire from his position as head of the English department at the end of this year and move to the home he has built in Gibson's Landing in British Columbia. Peter will leave behind a legacy of twenty years of fighting for gay and lesbian equality.

Peter's first involvement in the Saskatoon gay and lesbian community came in 1972. At that time the local community was just beginning to emerge and weekly dances were being held at the Unitarian Centre. Peter attended one of those early dances and when approached to sit on the board of that first organization he jumped at the chance to become involved. In the two decades since, Peter has been an important part of the growth and development of Saskatoon's lesbian and gay community and has been at the centre of the fight for equality.

Peter was born in Wales and his family moved to England when he was seven. He attended a technical college, worked as a clerk in the air force and later for an aircraft company. He immigrated to Canada to study English at McGill University and then returned to England to further his education at Oxford University. After his studies at Oxford, Peter was offered a job teaching English at the University of Saskatchewan, which he accepted.

For nearly two decades Peter has been the only professor at the U of S willing to publically state he is gay. In 1974, during a debate on whether God likes gay people, Peter stunned the audience by announcing his homosexuality.

"It was the first time a professor at this university and probably at any university in Western Canada had said that," said long-time friend, Neil Richards. "It was exciting for gay people to hear a respected person say that," he added.

Like most gay people who speak out publicly, Peter paid a price for his honesty. In 1975, the professors in the English department overwhelmingly voted him in as chair of the department. That usually meant the appointment was automatic, but the dean of Arts and Science ignored the wishes of the English department and appointed someone else. Many saw the unusual move as being motivated by Peter's stance on his sexual orientation. It would be a number of years before Peter would be appointed head of the English department.

Over the past years Peter has often been the only gay or lesbian person willing to speak out publicly on gay and lesbian issues. During the past nine years of rule by a homophobic Progressive Conservative government, many gays and lesbians were hesitant to speak out but Peter was willing to take on gay-bashers like former Premier Grant Devine or cabinet minister Grant Schmidt. He was the person many of us would refer the press to for public comments on gay and lesbian issues.

Peter's interests and influence extended far beyond gay and lesbian issues. He is very knowledgeable about art and, for a while, operated his own gallery from his home. He was collecting Eskimo prints and sculpture long before it was considered a good investment. He was instrumental in

forming the Mendel Art Gallery board and was often asked to judge at provincial art shows. He assisted many young artists and helped them get their careers going. In 1979, he discovered a little-known artist, Dmytro Stryjek, and made the local and national arts community sit up and take notice of Stryjek. He helped Stryjek become known through articles, a book and numerous exhibitions of his work.

Peter also was active with the Saskatchewan Association on Human Rights as a board member and as President of that organization. He helped forge important links for gay men and lesbians with other human rights groups and disadvantaged groups in Saskatchewan.

Peter has been active in the AIDS battle as well. He has worked as a member of the board of AIDS Saskatoon and, in 1990, was one of the key people in organizing a highly successful AIDS awareness program which brought an exhibition of AIDS posters to Saskatoon.

There are some who have taken offense at Peter's outspoken position on gay and lesbian issues, religion and many other topics. I, for one, am pleased that Peter has been part of my community. His courage and willingness to speak out for what he believes has always impressed me. I have had the pleasure of working with Peter on many issues and have learned much from him during those fights. Whenever our community was under attack, I always knew I could call Peter, if he didn't call me first, and discuss what could be done to fight back.

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

One of the many problems we experience as gay men and lesbians, especially for those coming out, is the lack of role models. Peter has helped smash that vicious myth that being gay means not being able to achieve success in our fields of interest. Gay activist,

Shawn Mooney, says Peter has helped to improve the climate for gays on campus and was instrumental in helping him come out publicly a few years ago because Peter "led the way." I suspect many others have found the courage to come out in their own way because of the example set by Peter.

"What he's leaving us is a chal-

lenge to carry on in that spirit of determined militancy in striving for the respect and dignity lesbians and gays deserve," Mooney said. Thank you, Peter. You will be missed but your legacy in Saskatoon will live on and the battle will be won. I hope someone has warned the homophobes in Gibson's Landing that you are coming.

CONDOMS AT SCHOOL

(Whitewood, SK) On March 11 the small town of Whitewood, 150 km east of Regina, became the first high school in Saskatchewan to install condom vending machines in school washrooms. The push to install the machines began in October when the students were addressed by an infection control officer and a PLWA. A survey of the students, staff and parents was initiated by principal Pat Connelly. The survey found that 88% of the students and 62% of the parents and teachers were in favour of the machines being installed.

Principal Connelly said "We tell our kids 'If you love yourself, protect yourself,' but we don't provide the access to that protection. We teach the kids about HIV and the dangers of promiscuity and unsafe sex, and it stops there. That's an incomplete lesson."

The trustees of the Whitewood school board were persuaded by the show of support for the machines and voted in favour of their installation on Jan. 29, even though the chairman opposed them.

The decisions of local school boards must also be approved by the division board. However, the Broadview School Division Board, which is responsible for five other southeastern schools, delayed final decision in the matter for a month to give time to those who opposed the decision to air their concerns. Opposing petitions came from Whitewood and Kipling as well as from two councillors from the RM of Willowdale. "Don't those who pay the piper have some say in the tune?" asked councillor Maki. "The school just isn't the right place for them," he added. "They teach abstinence in the school, so isn't it sending a contradictory message when you put condoms in the school?"

The division board finally decided in favour of the local school board. "We have to allow local boards some room. We have to respect their wishes," said division board Chairman Don Dale. However, many think the controversy isn't over yet.

Other communities have mixed reactions to the issue. In Regina, the chairman of the public schools, Margaret Fern, said, "If it would come forward, I would support it. I consider it to be a health issue." However, the chairman of the Separate School Board, Ron Kruzeniski said, "I wouldn't really see it as an issue for the separate school system. Because of values and beliefs, it wouldn't arise in the first place."

North Battleford's public school board chairman, Bob Foreman, said he was against the idea. "It's not my feeling that it makes people more (curious) but it breaks down more barriers, and when you're dealing with something as serious as AIDS...you're dealing with the risk of acquiring a deadly disease."

STUDENTS LOSE

(Treherne, MB) High school students at Treherne Collegiate got a first hand lesson in discrimination when a planned human rights day was scrapped. The event was planned by the student group Peace 2000 who had invited representatives from the aboriginal community, the University of Winnipeg Women's Centre, the physically challenged community, Winnipeg's Gays For Equality and other visible minorities to speak on a panel about discrimination during Human Rights Day.

The event was cancelled after some parents voiced opposition to gay activist Chris Vogel and a Winnipeg lesbian addressing the students. Principal Doug Metcalf ordered the students to drop Vogel after he received 25 to 30 calls from outraged parents. "It's a real shame," he said but the parents who called him didn't want a homosexual speaking to their children.

Kim Elder, one of the student organizers, said they decided to cancel the whole human rights day rather than discriminate themselves by excluding gays from the forum. "The purpose of human rights day was to show discrimination exists" she said. "I think we succeeded, but not the way we planned," she added. She also said the ban clearly showed that discrimination existed in Treherne, a rural community of 800 people 115 kilometres southwest of Winnipeg.

One of the parents, Carol Sylvestre, said she didn't want her daughter in Grade 12 to be exposed to the "homo and lesbian." According to her, impressionable Grade 9 students could have been converted to homosexuality if the panel discussion had gone ahead. "They've taken prayer out of the school...and homos and lesbians have rights where God has no right? I don't see it," she added.

Rene Chartier, a Roman Catholic priest in the nearby community of Holland, also objected to the human rights panel. "I wasn't invited and Christian values wouldn't be brought up," he said. "I think we're more discriminated against than those people right now," he added.

Not all parents were opposed to the gay and

lesbian speakers. Scott Smart was disgusted at the actions of some of the parents and said he welcomed the opportunity for his daughter, in Grade 11, to be exposed to minorities, including gays. "I thought people here were a little more open minded," he said.

Chris Vogel said the incident exposes the narrow-minded attitudes prevalent in most small communities. "It's a kind of mind control that was once universal, but is now confined to places like Treherne," he said. He also said it shows why many younger people flee small towns to larger cities where differences are more tolerated.

AIDS CLAIMS DOUG WILSON

(Saskatoon) Former Saskatonian Doug Wilson died in Toronto October 3 from AIDS-related pneumonia. Doug had turned 42 a few days before his death.

Doug was one of the early activists in the battle for gay and lesbian rights in Saskatchewan. He first gained national attention in 1975 when he went to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission to complain about treatment he had received from the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Doug was a graduate student in Education as well as a sessional lecturer. When his name appeared in an ad in the campus newspaper, *The Sheaf*, announcing the formation of a campus gay organization, he was informed that he would not be allowed to supervise student teachers in the public school system. At the time Education Dean Kirkpatrick said "Wilson's public association with the Gay Movement will hurt the College of Education's working relationship with the Saskatoon school system."

Doug did not win his case with the Human Rights Commission but he helped spark the formation of a campus gay group. His case is also considered an important first step in the university developing a policy barring discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Doug Wilson "was important on campus because CUPE and the Faculty Association asked for a non-discriminatory policy, and now all employee groups have such a policy," said longtime gay rights activist Neil Richards.

After leaving the university Doug went to work for the Saskatchewan Human Rights Association where he continued to fight for equality for gays and lesbians as well as other disadvantaged groups. Doug was active in Saskatoon's lesbian and gay community and served as the third President of the Gay & Lesbian Community Centre.

In 1982 Doug left Saskatoon for Toronto where he continued fighting for equality. He worked for the Toronto Board of Education where he was an advisor on race relations and equal opportunity. He was national coordinator for Mission for Peace which working to build support in Canada



Doug Wilson: An early prairie gay activist dies in Toronto.

for peace and social justice in Central America.

In 1988 Doug entered the political arena. He ran as the NDP candidate in the Toronto Rosedale riding in the federal election. Although he was unsuccessful in his bid for election to Parliament he was the first openly gay candidate to run for a major political party in Canada. "Such an extraordinary talented and diverse individual, you search for words to describe his," said MP Svend Robinson. "I will always remember Doug as a fighter, but a gentle fighter. He brought such integrity and strength, courage and beauty to every aspect of life. His early battles were an inspiration that many of us have fought to continue nationally. He was a hero for our gay and lesbian community."

Doug's interests extended far beyond the realm of politics. While in Saskatoon he founded Stubblejumper Press and published books of his poetry. He moved Stubblejumper with him when he moved to Toronto and published the works of his lover of 12 years, Peter McGehee as well as managing him as a singer and songwriter. In August Doug finished his first novel, *Labour of Love*, which was the third volume of the *Boys Like Us* trilogy begun by McGehee who died last year from AIDS complications.

When Doug tested positive for the HIV virus he took his dedication and convictions and went to work for the rights of people living with HIV and AIDS. He was a founding member of AIDS Action Now and founding chair of the Canadian Network of Organizations of People Living With HIV/AIDS.

Doug was planning to return to Saskatoon to read from his book at an AIDS Awareness Week event featuring readings from the writings of people living with AIDS. He died a week before he was to return to Saskatoon.

Doug was "a humanitarian who was involved in so much," said his friend Jeffery Canton. "He lived a very full life." Doug will be remembered for the impact he made on the communities in which he lived and for his fierce commitment to change.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST GAY MEN & LESBIANS IN SASKATCHEWAN

by EGALE Regina

This is the second in a series of articles that will discuss EGALE Regina's research into discrimination against Saskatchewan lesbians and gay men. In this article we discuss discrimination against lesbians and gay men by the education system.

We asked respondents to tell us if they think the education system in general discriminates against lesbians and gay men, and if so, what effect they think the discrimination has on them. 42% of males and 57.1% of females said they think it has a great effect. 46.2% of males and 32.7% of females said it has a lot of effect.

Respondents stated whether they had been **personally affected** by the education system, and the effects of discrimination in these areas on their lives as a gay man/lesbian. 24.3% said that discrimination in the education system affected them personally to a moderate or great extent.

Here are some of the comments that were made by respondents about their experiences in the education system. Comments from women are indicated with a ♀ symbol and comments from men are indicated with a ♂ symbol.

♀ Teaching is dicey for a lesbian. You can see how it's interpreted in the home or amongst peers by the kids. Superintendents are nervous with you. Principals can't believe it. One had to get dead drunk to ask me if what he heard was true about me. (I learned) that I "better have something to hide". Isolated. Never quite fit in for who you are, especially rurally. Always in the process of initiation by somebody or some group - just that feeling.

♀ No role models. Homosexuality seen as a little sick and in the seventies emphasized as being passing phase to be ignored. (I) ignored my feelings (sexuality) figuring they were unimportant, fleeting. They were not shown to be normal and serious for a minority but to be irrelevant for everyone. (Effect) my life is fucked up.

♀ In textbooks and teaching materials

lesbians are not seen or heard or talked about. The discrimination is one of silencing. It's like we don't exist or are not acknowledged. (I feel) extreme sadness, feelings of inferiority, feelings of having to hide myself.

♀ I am a graduate student and would sincerely love to study lesbians (my field of specialization). The problem is that I'd be laughed off of campus by all the male heterosexual profs, deans; I'm forced to study and become proficient in an area I don't much care about, while reading "lesbian studies" stuff on the side. I'm personally and professionally frustrated. Being unable to study what I want to prevents me, at least for the time being, from living the integrated lesbian life that I want to lead.

♀ In terms of the fact that there are no role models. Kids with gay parents have nothing to validate their way of life. There is no exposure for the kids around any different ways of living than nuclear family. Being a child with a gay mother I had to keep my mouth shut a lot, and hide the fact, until I decided not to bother. I was home schooled so did not have the incredible peer pressure of being a teenage lesbian in high school. That's not an easy position.

♀ It's heterosexual defined. Language is male oriented, heterosexual oriented. History is heterosexual male oriented. Health is heterosexual oriented, etc. etc. etc. Frustration and questioning of self, of my choices. What about my children when they are school age? What discrimination will they face having a dyke for a mother?

♀ The system totally ignores the "gay" issue in its curriculum, or deals with it negatively when it does have to face it, (dismissal of gay educators from teaching positions for no other reason except their sexuality). I feel the education system discriminates against all lesbians/gay men. Provides absolutely no support to gay persons. Again, helped to reinforce my terrible self image, helped to make me feel like I was bad and there was something wrong

with me. I had no role model or anything of the like. The education system is the one place children can be reached and taught to be open and educated on issues instead of prejudiced and hateful.

♀ No gay content in the education system, no support services for coming out, as a prospective educator, I will remain in the closet - how then can I be a positive role model? (The effect is) denial to colleagues, peers, etc.

♀ All role models closeted, therefore not really role models. Lesbianism never mentioned as an alternative healthy lifestyle. Little time spent in University psych classes on lesbians (except when they don't want to be, then we can call it sick), little free discussion, homophobia among students. This has made my education somewhat irrelevant to my life much of the time. I have felt that I had to risk several times to talk about lesbians as a viable alternative - sometimes positive, sometimes negative.

♀ The education system is pretty much like the whole world, an "old boys club". The discrimination abounds if you are a woman, never mind a lesbian feminist! One of the largest areas of discrimination is with the college or university female athlete. To this day I am bitter about the athletic scholarships and funding available to male athletes. Daily, as I study in a male dominated field, the work, thoughts, and ideas of my female counterparts are trivialized.

♀ This is indirectly felt based on the attitudes and information brought home from school by our children. Last year my 10 year old's teacher made negative remarks in the classroom about gays and lesbians. This kind of discrimination puts a strain on my relationship with my children.

♀ Health insurance coverage not available for partner when I was student. Relationship not recognized. No extra coverage available to all others.

♀ Systems like the education system, law,

medicine, dentistry, engineering are run by the old boys. Respect, understanding, treatment as equals is non-existent. Am I really supposed to be in a kitchen at home? (I am) sensitive to potentially innocent sexual gestures or comments, on guard, major double life stuff; Who am I?

♀ The presentation of heterosexuality as the only possibility limited me. Pervasive heterosexism! I'm sure I would have come out at a younger age than I did if the option of lesbianism had ever even been presented (even negatively!). If I had known about homosexuality, or known any gay people, that reality would have made my perceptions about myself and my sexuality make a lot more sense at a younger age.

♀ The concept of homosexuality is treated with such disdain; the subject tends to be glossed over in Psychology 101; one tends to take ages to come to terms with it because it's never presented as just another form of *human* sexuality. I resisted my attraction to women for years. I was *terrified* that I'd be viewed as sick or ugly or as a man-hater. I also feared the loneliness of being "different".

♀ Heterosexual models in history, literature, everything. (The result was) low self-esteem - thought I was the only one in the world with this "problem".

♀ No gays/dykes history or views in education system. (We) have home-schooled the children.

♀ I am not able to "come out" in this system because of its well known conservative beliefs. It affects my work and my social life.

♂ Growing up as a gay youth I was provided with no information about gay men and women. Again the discrimination was covert and caused by omission. While struggling with my sexual identity I could have benefitted from accurate information. The educational system still neglects to deal with the image and in the few cases when they do it is usually from a negative attitude. I spent most of my teen years denying who I was and hiding my true feelings. This robbed me of my teen years as I felt I had to hide from other people for fear they would discover my

true feelings. Today the system still puts gay and lesbian youth in a situation where they cannot obtain support, which causes pain. They deny the natural growth of individuals who are part of my community, which affects me by causing me to live in a community which experiences extreme pain.

♂ I work in a male dominated academic field and I know of 4 gay and lesbian students working on Masters and PhD degrees in this field. All were frightened that their gayness would be discovered. Two students in undergraduate degrees were harassed verbally by fellow students without comment (therefore condonation) by professors in the classroom. The gay students knew me because of my volunteer work ... and came to me with their fears. This is a tough college for gays and lesbians. All professors are male and in their 50's.

♂ Attend University where remarks were made in the negative about homosexuality from fellow students and professors. Made me very angry, often would withdraw from the situation.

♂ It is very difficult for a young gay person to find out about being gay and what it means. Growing up with a very confused adolescence.

♂ Gays and lesbians are discouraged from entering scientific fields, and people in scientific fields are discouraged from taking humanity classes as credits. I've been told by supervisors, "only fags take these classes". For my Master's degree in Science I wanted to take a photography class. I was told "only fags take these classes" He knew I was gay. I said "Only straights know the benefits of unbalanced education." He was insulted and angry. I said "Now you know what I felt". You have to pick the moments carefully, in which to make rebuttals.

♂ As a high school gym student the teacher taunted me for being a "fairy" because I wasn't a good baseball player. I felt embarrassed and shame at the time. I am still angry about the callousness of the teacher. It made me think about my sexual orientation, and try to hide it.

♂ Being called faggot, beaten up, ridi-

culed in class for being effeminate (by teachers as well as classmates). I think this had such a profound impact I'm unable to say where it begins and ends. I "fear" almost every straight relationship because of these experiences.

In general, we perceive or experience a lack in the education system of positive representations of homosexuality, in fact a lack of information about homosexuality. Often the only representation of homosexuality is negative. Even at a post secondary level we are not able to study homosexuality/lesbianism. We may face ridicule by classmates and teachers.

This may result in us feeling that education is irrelevant to our lives. The lack of information and support may have contributed to us denying our sexuality. Many people felt they would have come out sooner if homosexuality had been presented positively. Instead we have attempted to hide our homosexuality with the results being a denial of our selves and our true feelings. This denial causes extreme pain. The lack of positive discussion of homosexuality or any discussion causes, at best, widespread misunderstanding, and at worst, hatred and vilification of us by the people that we interact with daily. We experience low self esteem, we are angry and withdraw from situations.

In the next issue of *PERCEPTIONS* we will look at the discrimination experienced by gay men and lesbians in employment.

There are a good number of assumptions that people have about how the issue of HIV/AIDS is being dealt with in Saskatchewan. The one assumption I hear quite regularly is that people have access to education and information as they go through our schools. The sad reality in 1996 is simply the opposite. Many kids, in fact the majority of kids, receive no school based education to help them prevent HIV infection. Now, when most people hear that fact, they often appear quite startled; they'll say something like "well how could that be? Why wouldn't we teach kids how to protect themselves from a potentially fatal infection?" Well those are very good questions, but, like school, marks are given for good answers and not good questions.

The groups in the Saskatchewan AIDS Network have been pressuring the government for the past year to see them include compulsory Health education, that includes HIV/AIDS prevention for students in Kindergarten to grade 12. We're not suggesting that kindergarten students need education around HIV transmission, but they do need to be taught skills around being healthy so that when they reach the age to begin learning about the ways HIV is transmitted, they have the skills and esteem to cope with the issues as they become sexually active. I recently had an opportunity to review two current curriculum pieces being used in our schools around HIV, namely: *Responsibilities and Leadership in the Fight Against AIDS* and *Acting for an AIDS-Free Future*. The most startling reality in going through these documents is the date of writing: 1985 and 1988 (although the document dated 1988 appears to be a photocopy of the document from 1985).

You certainly don't have the patience dear reader, nor I the time, to examine all the pitfalls that this pathetically inaccurate curriculum creates. I thought, though, that you might enjoy the high points. Probably the most inaccurate and damaging part of the curriculum is the single most important part of the material itself (you know, when government screws something up, they always do it in a big way...). There is a section designed to be photocopied onto

transparencies for overhead projectors. It succinctly lists the ways to avoid HIV infection. Number one on the list is that old favourite, abstinence—an admirable quality and the most effective way to prevent HIV infection (also, coincidentally, the best way to avoid a sex life). For those, though, who have chosen to be sexually active, there are several more hints for them, including having a monogamous relationship. The curriculum, however, fails to explain what monogamy is. Monogamy means that two virgins meet and begin a sexual relation-

*Most people in our
society engage in
what is called serial
monogamy (which
doesn't involve sex
with Captain
Crunch.)*

ship that never includes any other partners for as long as they both shall have a libido. Period... Full stop... Light a cigarette and relax. Most people in our society engage in what is called serial monogamy (which doesn't involve sex with Captain Crunch.) That is, several different exclusive partners, sometimes over their entire life. If you've had more than one exclusive partner over your life, you cannot ever be truly monogamous ever again. The curriculum also doesn't explain that two monogamous partners, who have properly tested negative for HIV, don't need to be concerned about HIV infection from each other ever again.

The other points listed for HIV prevention are equally problematic. Next on their list is "reduce your number of partners". Stemming from the days when, almost exclusively, gay men (who have 170 partners a week, you know...) were dying from AIDS in North America, this point once again misses the reality of HIV infection. If you choose to have 365 partners in a year, and you use protection from HIV every time, you have not placed yourself at risk. Conversely, if you have one unsafe sexual

encounter in a year, that will put you at risk. The point is that it is not *what* you do, or how many *times* you do it, it simply comes down to *how* you do it. The last point listed on their lovely overhead is "avoid anal sex". Huh? Anal sex without a condom is risky. Anal sex with a latex condom doesn't have to be risky at all. Of course, it wouldn't be like our schools to explain that fact; fear mongering seems to be more appropriate. But what good does "avoid anal sex" really do anyway? Well, it reinforces the stereotype that man-to-man sex is more dangerous than vaginal sex. It tells gay youth that they can't participate in a sexual activity that they may already be participating in safely, and it scares all the young hetero kids who engage in anal sex as a form of birth control.

A great deal of what we've learned since condemning the material from the Education Ministry has been difficult to verify. First of all, the materials I referred to are not considered by the Education Ministry to be the last resource for teachers; the documents are only intended to be a starting point for teachers to build from. What the Ministry fails to understand, though, is that if teachers don't know enough to understand how bad the curriculum is in the first place, why would they pursue more accurate information? The other reality that needs to be considered is the incredible burdens already placed on teacher's time. Do they have the time to seek out newer information - and why should they second guess the abilities of curriculum that the government has never indicated as being accurate? So that's the reality - education around HIV/AIDS in our public schools is based on information from 1985. What do you suppose the government has had to say about this? Well, they too, have forgotten that in school you're graded on answers. Changes to the HIV/AIDS curriculum will start in 1997 and changes to the Health curriculum will be completed in the year 1999/2000. Based on that, I'd give the Minister of Education a failing grade and hope that one day she might want to assume some responsibility for the lives of the children she may well jeopardise through her inaction. *[P]*

DEALING WITH SUICIDE

(Calgary) School trustees in Calgary have voted in support of a plan to create an information package to assist teachers who are working with lesbian and gay students. The decision to implement the plan came after the release of a study by University of Calgary social worker Chris Bagley who reported that young gay men are almost 14 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.

For his study Bagley randomly surveyed 750 men between the ages of 18 and 27. From the survey he concluded that gay men are 14 times more likely to attempt suicide compared to heterosexual men. He also discovered that half of all males who make serious suicide attempts are gay or bisexual and that gay men re-attempt suicide up to 50 per cent more than heterosexual men.

Bagley also concluded that health professionals and school counsellors aren't adequately trained to deal with the issue.

Pat Boyle, gender issues adviser for the school board, said a recent random survey in Calgary suggests that the number of gay and lesbian students in the Calgary school system could be as high as 12.9% of the student population.

Boyle said she is aware of gay beatings in Calgary high schools. "It starts in junior high," she says. "If a young man doesn't fit the stereotype of a sports-minded male, then that student may be put down and called a 'fag' or 'gay'." She added that young lesbians face similar pressures that frequently end up in academic problems, depression, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide. She also suggested that the gay and lesbian drop-out rate in high schools is well above average.

Pater Hodgson of the gay youth support group I-Dentity told the trustees, "They're in Grade 1, they're in Grade 6, they're in Grade 9, and they're in Grade 12. We're asking as gay, lesbian and bisexual youth, you keep us safe."

David Spence, a 17-year-old private school student who once tried to kill himself, welcomed the move by the trustees. "It'll help a lot of students and a lot of kids. It'll make it easier (for them) to be who they want to be instead of hiding."

GAY STUDIES AT U of S

(Saskatoon) The Department of Education Foundations began offering a class in Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education this term. The fourth year class is being taught by Don Cochrane, the Acting Head and Graduate Coordinator in the Department.

Cochrane said he has been thinking about the class for eight to ten years, adding that he has been slow getting around to the class. "The original motivation for the class is lost in the mists of time," Cochrane said. "I felt there was an ethical imperative to offer the class to break the all-around silence on the topic. These issues needed to be discussed," he added.

Cochrane has been working for a year-and-a-half preparing for the class. He needed to obtain approval from seven different levels at the department and university which added to the delay. "I had heard stories about misadventures at other universities who offered classes in gay and lesbian studies so I wanted to take my time," he said. "There was some foot-dragging but the class went through faculty easily without any fire-fights. There was a wonderful sense of affirmation from faculty members in discussing the class," he said. "People decided it was time to stand up and be counted and that the class can help break the silence."

The class focuses on five main areas of study: The emerging gay and lesbian student; gay and lesbian teachers and the problems they face; inclusivity in the curriculum; special challenges for school counsellors; and homophobia and how it manifests itself.

Cochrane said he was worried whether many students would register for the course. He wondered if students would be worried about the course title appearing on their transcripts or if students would worry about who else would show up for the class. Originally he thought that four or five students might register for the class. "I'm so delighted that seventeen students are signed up for the first offering," he said.

Cochrane said he is very excited about finally being able to offer the class. "The university is a place to carry on a discussion about these important issues," he said. If a university can't do it, who can?" Cochrane added that the discussion about the class has caused other colleagues to bring the issue out of the closet and raise it in their other classes.

AIDS ON SCHOOL CURRICULUM

(Regina) After a number of years of lobbying, AIDS is finally being put on the elementary school curriculum. AIDS organizations in Saskatchewan have been lobbying the education department to remove material devised in 1986, which is extremely value laden and inaccurate, and replace it with more accurate and sensitive material. The changes were promised for last September but won't appear now until next September.

Children in grades 1-6 will now learn about AIDS as part of the health curriculum. Craig Dotson, deputy education minister, was quick to point out that children will not learn about sex, drug abuse and condom use until grades 7-9. In the earlier grades they will only learn about the differences between accidental injury and diseases like AIDS. Dotson also said that AIDS issues are part of optional parts of the package that not all students will get.

"We're pleased to see that the education department is replacing the dangerous and outmoded information that teachers currently have on AIDS but we have concerns that the AIDS package is optional and won't be used in many schools," said Gens Hellquist a steering committee member of the Saskatchewan AIDS Network. Many young people will still be at risk for contracting HIV because they won't get the facts in school," he added.

Tory MLA Ben Heppner said he was concerned that Grade 1 students will learn about sex if AIDS is mentioned as part of the health curriculum. "Those two are pretty closely linked, you can't deal with one without the other," he said. He added that

parents should have the right to veto information being given to their kids on sensitive topics like AIDS.

The Saskatchewan Pro-Life Association is also encouraging their members to express their displeasure with the discussion of AIDS and condoms in the schools. In their newsletter they claimed that AIDS education is the same as sex education and will include discussion of topics like anal and oral intercourse.

The Pro-Lifers are also concerned about a section of the curriculum which encourages children to be empathetic, tolerant, respectful and understanding towards people who suffer from afflictions or disease. They complain about a section of the material that suggests one way people can show support for tolerance towards gays and lesbians is to wear a gay pride t-shirt or walk in a gay parade. Saskatchewan hasn't had a gay parade for a number of years. They suggest that the change in curriculum is not a medical decision but a political decision.

INTOLERANCE BANNED

(Calgary) The Calgary school board has come out unanimously in support of a new policy to address issues of homophobia and intolerance in the school system. The policy came about after a University of Calgary study showed that gay, lesbian and bisexual youth are regularly subjected to verbal and physical violence in public schools.

The policy was not passed without opposi-

tion in Calgary. A group calling itself Parents Response Association, which has links to the Victory Church, attacked the board, suggesting the policy would result in kids being taught to be homosexuals. They have announced that they will be challenging school board members during the next board elections. They also brought members of Homosexual Anonymous, a group that claims to cure homosexuality, to Calgary to speak at board and public meetings in their efforts to have the policy thrown out.

The new policy comprises an action plan on a range of safety issues. It mandates zero tolerance for abuse of any form directed at students, teachers and staff because they are perceived as being lesbian, gay or bisexual. It also clearly recognizes that gay and lesbian youth are at increased risk for abuse as well as a range of health issues.

The policy focuses on education and mediation when problems arise but also allows for expulsion for those who consistently violate the policy. It also ensures that gay, lesbian or bisexual youth can talk to a school guidance counsellor without the fear of having their orientation reported to their parents.

The policy has garnered support from a number of quarters. Members of Identity, a Calgary lesbian and gay youth group, spoke at board meetings and eloquently testified how abuse affected their education. They have been a visible presence throughout the debate.

The Calgary policy is part of a growing trend across Canada for school boards to begin addressing homophobia in education.

UNDER ATTACK

(Regina) Many people were shocked to find that the October 2 edition of the University of Regina campus paper, the *Carillon*, contained an article which attacked the year old group G-BLUR (Gays, Bisexuals and Lesbians at the University of Regina). The article accused the University of Regina Students Union (URSU) of unilaterally giving office space to the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), which in turn gave it to G-BLUR. They were also accused of giving G-BLUR free voice mail, phone, long distance, photocopying, and a budget of over \$500 a year.

CFS TGLB Liaison and founder/past chair of G-BLUR, Sheldon Cooke, said he was very upset about the article. "The article was a vicious attack on a group that did nothing wrong, and never received any of the so called 'free' services that they supposedly received," Cooke said. "It was a personal attack at URSU that managed to further oppress a group that happened to get in the way." According to an URSU source, the *Carillon* wanted the space for their own executive meetings.

"The damage that was done cannot be undone easily. there are some student groups on campus that are very upset at G-BLUR for all of these imaginary perks that they are getting," states Cooke "while in fact, that space is not G-BLUR's but belongs to CFS which allows the non-executive board members to use for their constituent group. G-BLUR belongs to my constituency, therefore, I am fully within my mandate to allow G-BLUR to meet and operate a GLB Centre there, as long as we share with other such constituency groups, like the International Students Group, and Students Advocating Gender Equality. As for the phone, fax and long distance, that room doesn't have a live telephone jack. How can someone make free long distance if there is no phone? It is obvious that this story is false."

A URSU source also notes that the author of the article knew the conditions of usage of the room and that he so called perks were non-existent. In a *Carillon* meeting the next day, several apologies were issued, a gay staffer resigned and a retraction was promised.

"It was an absolute horror that this made it

to press," said Cooke. "Although there have been apologies issued, I am still very angry and upset at the author and no amount of apologies can undo the damage done. This article contravened the U of R sexual harassment guidelines and the URSU has zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment so we will be bringing the author before the Sexual Harassment Officer on campus. It's a shame, but it has to be done to prevent this monstrosity from happening. I just feel badly for those students who will be hearing negative things about 'those special rights faggots' and end up going back further into the closet."

BANNING BOOKS

(Calgary) Once again an incident as occurred in Alberta that has many people wondering whether the province is becoming more redneck and falling further behind other parts of the country in providing protection against discrimination for minorities. The province has been taken to the Supreme Court over its refusal to provide protection from discrimination for lesbians and gay men, they have refused to allow lesbians and gays to be foster parents, and some MLAs called for the return of a grant which was to be used to document the history of the gay and lesbian community in Alberta.

Now the Calgary Public School Board has banned two books from its shelves after some parents complained about their "promotion of homosexuality." Dr. Donna Michaels, the school board's chief superintendent, admitted pulling the books off the shelves after meeting with a group called Parents' Rights in Education (PRE). The group has been sounding an alarm about the school system allowing the "gay agenda" into the schools

"In my professional judgment, I determined that the language was highly inappropriate," Michaels said. However, she would not state publicly, or tell the school board, which books had been removed after pressure from PRE. She said the two offending books must first go before a committee set up to hear public complaints about books in the school system, adding that the process could take a month. She said the language she objected to was pornographic and did not involve gay or lesbian themes.

Tom Crites, a spokesperson for PRE, claimed one of the banned books was the anthology *Not the Only One: Lesbian and Gay Fiction for Teens* edited by Tony Grima. He could not name the other book his group deemed offensive. He said he too found the swear words offensive but admitted that the real problem is that the book is about homosexuality. "It is really pro-gay," he said. He was also concerned that many of the stories were about people's personal coming out story, which his group finds offensive.

Crites indicated his group's agenda of re-

moving all reference to homosexuality from the school system is far from over. He said PRE is attempting to identify the school board employee who ordered the two offending books. "We do have our suspicions," he said. "We've still doing some checking around." He also indicated that his group has identified 30 to 40 other books that address gay and lesbian issues.

Spokespeople from the gay and lesbian community said this latest move is part of an explosion in anti-gay attitudes in Alberta and a clear sign that Alberta is one of the least tolerant places in Canada. "When you sit around and chat in the community, people feel we're behind the rest of the country," said Roy Heale, publisher of the gay newspaper *Outlooks*. "As long as we continue doing this, we're perpetuating our reputation of being redneck."

Gail Allen, a spokesperson for PFLAG, said she could not agree with banning books from school libraries that deal with homosexuality. "I don't think they should be pulling books from the shelves," she said, adding that her son, who is gay, would have had a happier adolescence if he had access to books that explain the realities of being gay.

School board members also expressed concern about the removal of the books and the process that was used. "We feel that this is an important issues," said trustee Jennifer Pollock. "It needs to be addressed."

EDUCATING TEACHERS

(Saskatoon) The next big battleground for lesbian and gay rights is likely to be the educational system. Already battles are being fought in schools across Canada over the issue of whether the existence of lesbian and gay teachers, students and staff will be acknowledged and protection against discrimination provided.

In Saskatoon, Gay & Lesbian Health Services' (GLHS) Safe School Project is working to bring the issue of homosexuality out of the closet and into the light in Saskatoon schools. In February, the first ever workshop on lesbian and gay issues was presented at the Teacher's Institute. The workshop presented a panel of a gay and lesbian youth, a parent of a gay child, a community worker and two high school teachers who have worked with gay youth. The two gay youth, the parent and the community worker discussed the problems presented by homophobia in the education system. The

teachers discussed the ways they have addressed the topic in their classrooms.

Over eighty teachers, administrators and school board members showed up for the workshop. Some were in tears as they listened to the problems and pain homophobia caused panel members.

This was not the first time an attempt was made to address homophobia in the Teacher's Institute but this was the first time the topic was allowed on the agenda. The initial title of the workshop was Homophobia Is Killing Us, but after some administrators called the topic inflammatory and refused to allow it on the agenda, the organizers changed the title to Breaking The Silence.

"This was an exciting breakthrough," said Gens Hellquist executive director of GLHS. "We were pleased with the response the workshop received and look forward to

other opportunities to address the issue of homophobia in the education system.

Sharon Fike, a high school guidance counsellor and member of the Safe School Project, said she was excited about the results of the workshop. "We now have people openly discussing homophobia in our schools," she added.

The Safe School Project meets monthly at GLHS and welcomes anyone who wishes to be involved in combating homophobia in the education system.

In other efforts to educate educators about homophobia, the College of Education at the UofS is sponsoring a one-day conference on March 21 titled Breaking The Silence: Gays & Lesbians in Our Schools. The conference is open to educators and others who wish to look at ways to address homophobia in the school system.

BREAKING THE SILENCE annual conference

BREAKING THE SILENCE

(Saskatoon) Nearly 100 people showed up for the first Annual Breaking the Silence: Gays & Lesbians in our Schools conference on March 21. The conference, sponsored by the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, was aimed at educating teachers and school administrators about the plight faced by lesbian, gay and bisexual students and staff in the educational system.

The conference kicked off with a panel discussion featuring people who have experienced homophobia at the hands of the school system. One panellist talked about her pain in having her kids verbally abused by classmates because their mother is a lesbian. Two recent graduates of the high school system talked about their difficulties in trying to deal with their sexual orientation in small town Saskatchewan. One former student, Erin Scriven, talked about her nine suicide attempts and the weeks she spent in a psychiatric facility caused largely by the lack of support in her school.

A parent of a gay son moved the audience with her discussion about the pain she and her son went through during the son's school years. She called on the school system to address the issues of homophobia and open up a sane dialogue about gay and lesbian people so those in the system can find support.

Originally a gay teacher had planned to sit on the panel but at the last minute decided it was not safe to openly disclose his sexual orientation. An empty chair was left at the table to demonstrate the fear of disclosure faced by lesbian and gay teachers. A non-gay counsellor, who works extensively with teachers, came down from the audience and sat in the empty chair and recounted her experiences working with lesbian and gay teachers who don't feel safe in the school system.

The afternoon was taken up with workshops and videos that were intended to provide some skills to assist educators in dealing with homophobia. In one workshop administrators looked at ways they could develop policy that would address homophobia and provide some degree of

safety for gay people in the system. A second workshop was aimed at teachers and counsellors and looked at ways they could provide support for those students in their schools who are lesbian or gay. A third workshop previewed two videos that addressed homophobia in the educational system.

The conference was closed by the Hon. Pat Atkinson, Minister of Education in the Saskatchewan government. Atkinson expressed her hope that she could work with conference participants to make schools in Saskatchewan more supportive of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Not only those who wanted to learn about ways to create safety in schools for lesbians and gays attended the conference. Approximately ten people from a variety of right-wing groups were present taking notes on everything that was said. Saskatoon Reform MP Maurice Vellacott was there as was Cynthia Forsyth, president of R.E.A.L. Women. Both suggested that schools should teach about the so-called cures for homosexuality that they claimed were available.

Conference organizers, a coalition of university people and community groups, were pleased with the turnout for the conference. Attendance was affected by the late mailing of conference information and a short planning time. Organizers have already decided that the conference will occur again next year and be expanded to a two-day format.

CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

(Saskatoon) The second annual Breaking The Silence: Gays & Lesbians in the Schools conference, held March 12 and 13, was a success with over 90 people attending to look at ways to make schools more hospitable places for lesbian and gay students and staff. The conference was sponsored by the Education Department at the University of Saskatchewan.

The conference kicked off with an opening address by MP Svend Robinson who addressed the importance of breaking the silence surrounding gays and lesbians in the schools as well as in other areas of life. Robinson spoke about the many young people who write to him about the perils of the school system.

The following day a series of workshops looked at various aspects of the issues surrounding gays and lesbians in the schools. Murray Warren, a member of Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia, told the conference that not enough was being done in schools across the country to address the teasing and violence that gay and lesbian students face in the education system.

Prof. Don Cochrane, co-ordinator of the conference organizing committee, said events like this conference are crucial because of the oppression that lesbian and gay students face. He also expressed his frustration over the difficulty in publicizing the conference to educators. "One of the real difficulties is getting publicity into schools because the issue is so volatile," he said. "Some schools won't put posters up in their staffrooms."

"Gay and lesbian teachers are in a very

difficult position in this province," Cochrane added. "They live in fear — fear of intimidation, fear of being berated, fear of job loss. So there's a lot of emotion that comes out at this conference because a lot of these people are so oppressed, and by and large their pains have been muffled, they're not allowed to talk."

Neal Anderson, a substitute teacher in the Saskatoon public school system, attended the conference because he has concerns about the gay and lesbian students he works with. "I find that a great number of students utilize 'gay' and 'lesbian' and 'fag' as taunts for students who just don't fit in," he said.

Norman MacDonald, a 16-year-old gay high-school student said he found the conference encouraging as it provided a place for him to speak out and feel accepted. "It's just been very nice to be here," he said. "People actually wanted to listen to my ideas here — that was a nice feeling," he added.

MacDonald said he felt empowered by the conference and would return to school the next week to ask why teachers from his school weren't there. "I'm taking this whole bag of information back to my school on how to help gay and lesbian students and make schools more comfortable for them, and how to make guidance counsellors more approachable," he added.

Unlike the first conference when numerous right-wing individuals showed up to cause problems, this year everyone who attended was genuinely interested in finding ways to address the issues of homophobia in the education system.

Cochrane said he was very excited about

the response to the conference. "This has been absolutely extraordinary," he said. "I think we have begun to form community at this time. We may be able to look back on this in ten years time, and say history was made in that day and a half."

The date for next year's conference has already been set and planning will soon start on the third Breaking the Silence conference.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

(Saskatoon) Over 100 delegates attended the Breaking The Silence: Gays & Lesbians in the Schools conference held in Saskatoon on March 17 and 18. The conference, which has occurred for the past three years, is hosted by the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan.

The conference was kicked off Friday evening with a presentation by Olympic gold medallist Mark Tewksbury, who spoke on the topic "squeeze life" and disclosed his own journey to acceptance as a gay man. The auditorium was packed as Tewksbury shared his journey and philosophy of life. He encouraged the audience to never lose sight of what's really important in life and to go after their dreams with all their hearts and all their strength.

Tewksbury also said he learned three important lessons of life from his journey to an Olympic gold medal. The first was that no matter what happened, he had to learn something from it. The second was the importance of living within the moment as that's where life is lived. The third lesson he shared with the audience was to always be our best. That way we would have no regrets afterwards.

Tewksbury also discussed how he hit rock bottom six months after winning his gold medal. He felt alone, isolated and trapped between two worlds. He was so depressed that he was unable to get off the floor. He finally realized that "all that stemmed from ignoring the most important thing, being true to yourself and standing behind who and what you are."

"All the awards and the material wealth is meaningless if you don't like yourself... meaningless," he said. "And the amazing thing is that if you're true to yourself, and you live in the moment and be the best you can be, you become an inspiration. People see you being yourself and that

gives them the courage to be themselves and it's a magical chain reaction."

He told the audience coming out in 1998 was a life-changing experience for him. "When I finally accepted myself it turned out that everyone else did too. I was the biggest person holding me back," he said.

On Saturday, a panel discussion with representatives from most of the major play-

*"When I finally
accepted myself, it
turned out that
everyone else did
too."*

—Mark Tewksbury
Olympic Gold Medalist

ers in the education field in Saskatchewan spoke. The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA), the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF), Saskatchewan Education, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS) were all at the table and agreed that more must be done to make schools safer for gay, lesbian and bisexual students, teachers and staff.

LEADS representative Jim Hopson said he agreed to sit on the panel partly out of guilt for the times in the past when he has observed homophobia and did nothing. "I prided myself on being an advocate for special-needs kids, women, minorities, but up to now, not for gays and lesbians," he admitted to the audience. "I've been one of those people who had difficulty even talking about the issue because of the background and experience I've had."

Hopson indicated that he was not proud

of his past behaviour. "That's why I thought it was very important for me to step forward at this conference and voice my opinion and be an advocate for all people and show respect for all human beings, whoever they are."

George Georget, representing the STF, outlined the progress that his organization has made in providing same-sex benefits to teachers and dealing with sexual orientation issues. "We will never achieve equity unless we address racism, discrimination against women, discrimination because of religion and discrimination because of sexual orientation," he said.

Gillian McCreary, Saskatchewan Education's executive director of planning and evaluation and children's services, said many department policies and procedures have equity built in. "In assessment and evaluation, one of the challenges we are struggling with is how to influence change," she said. She sees the biggest stumbling block as being able to get teachers in the classroom to understand and teach the new policies.

McCreary also indicated her department is developing a special section on sexual orientation and indicators for assessment of issues such as safety in the schools.

All organizations represented on the panel where criticized for the lack of visibility for lesbians and gays in their policy framework "Our Children, Our Communities and our Future."

During the Saturday afternoon of the conference a number of workshops were held on varied issues of gays and lesbians in the schools. The workshops covered ways for teachers to be more proactive in creating safe spaces for lesbian and gay students, transgendered issues, queer studies at the University of Saskatchewan and violence in the schools. The conference ended with a dramatic presentation.

SILENCE-BREAKING SUCCESSFUL

(Saskatoon) The 5th Annual Breaking The Silence conference was an overwhelming success this year, with approximately a hundred people in attendance. This year saw more teachers attending to learn of ways to make their school a safer environment for lesbian and gay students and staff.

The conference kicked off with 260 people listening to a presentation by Joseph Arvay, Q.C. about the Surrey book banning case. Arvay is the lead lawyer in the fight to allow teachers to use three books about diverse families. So far the Surrey school board has spent \$1 million fighting to keep the books out of their schools. The case is scheduled to be heard by the Supreme Court in June.

"This case presents a new legal challenge and it might up the ante as far as equality for same-sex families is concerned," Arvay said. "A win in this case could represent the ultimate badge of a same-sex relationship by our state. We are seeking from the courts that equality of celebration of a same-sex family, and the courts might not be ready for that," Arvay conceded.

Cheryl Erlandson, a consultant for the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit of the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation (STF), also unveiled two equity documents she is working on. The two documents, "Safe Schools: Breaking The Silence on Sexual Differences" and "Uncovering Stones: Addressing Issues of Equality in the Staffroom" will be finalized and ready for use in June.

Safe Schools provides information and resources to enable teachers to provide support for gay and lesbian students as well as fellow staff members. It also puts gay issues in a Saskatchewan context, so people realize that gays and lesbians live in Saskatchewan as well as big cities like Toronto. "There are lesbian and gay teachers and students in Saskatchewan," she said. "These are real problems that are really happening in Saskatchewan."

Uncovering Stones focuses on develop-

ing a workshop package for teachers or administrators to use in their schools. It looks at the legal and ethical responsibilities that teachers and administrators have regarding gays and lesbians and raises awareness of issues.

A powerful presentation started off the Saturday workshop series when a tape was played of gay and lesbian youth recounting their horrendous experiences of growing up gay or lesbian in a system that denies their existence. Many in the audience were in tears as one young man discussed his suicide attempts or a young lesbian talked about the hostility she faced at school when it was thought she was a lesbian.

"I think that our schools have to be places that everyone feels safe in and if there is this section of the population that doesn't feel safe, then we need to do something about it," Erlandson said.

TWINS SPEAK

(Winnipeg) Jennifer and Corrine Sterling set out to educate students in their school about homophobia and ended up receiving a powerful lesson on homophobia courtesy of their school board. The two 18-year-old twin lesbians graduated from River East Collegiate this June.

Their lesson on homophobia began last fall when Jennifer made a class presentation on homophobia to her psychology class. She earned a perfect grade for the presentation and her teacher encouraged her to take her presentation to other classes in the school.

Jennifer recruited her sister Corrine and together they made four other presentations to classes at the Collegiate. They were well received by the students and teachers but the River East School Division was not amused after receiving complaints from two parents. The twins were ordered to stop their presentations.

The twins were supported by their principal, Bill Welsh, who accompanied them to a board meeting. "They're two very impressive young ladies. They have a lot of courage, and they deserve a fair shake," he said.

"When is enough times enough times?" said Bob Fraser, chair of the board. "You can't expect every presentation to go to every class," he added. "I don't care what it is."

Welsh disagreed with the board and said the trustees are too scared to address touchy subjects. He also pointed out that all the students in his school attended anti-racism workshops last fall and wondered why his students can learn about racism but not homophobia. Welsh is due to retire soon and is planning to run in the fall election for the school board.

The school division appears focused on preventing students from learning about homophobia. They also pulled an article on homophobia, written by the twins, from the school paper. Welsh called the decision a blatant case of censorship.

The two women vow they will continue their crusade. They are planning on paying a visit to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission to complain that their freedom of speech has been denied.

In early October, Matthew Shepard, an openly gay University of Wyoming student in Laramie, was murdered. Allegedly, two men picked Matthew up at a local bar by telling him that they were gay. They allegedly enticed him into their car and drove him out of Laramie. Nearly 24 hours later, Matthew Shepard was found bound to a fence post, crucifixion-style, and beaten nearly to death. Four days later, he died. The two men have been charged with first degree murder while their girlfriends have been charged with being accessories to the crime. Prosecutors may ask for the death penalty in this case. The last execution in Wyoming was in 1991.

What happened to Matthew Shepard should be a wake up call for all of us.

What happened to Matthew Shepard should be a wake up call for all of us. As we are nearing the turn of this century, attitudes toward homosexuality have not really changed much. Don't get me wrong, we have made exponential leaps in terms of human rights legislation, and some government and private pension benefits, but the day-to-day life of a gay man or woman is not really that different than it was 50 years ago.

As a teacher, I can assure you that the favourite pejorative used in and out of schools in this country is "Fag!" with "You lesbian!" now getting nearly as much time. (Amen for equal rights.) Children are learning this hate somewhere and my guess is, it starts at home. I've seen too much poison and aggression spewed accompanying the "Fag!" and "You lesbian!" to realize that it isn't just a convenient and benign expression. These children display a genuine hatred and disgust when uttering these words; it's very deep-rooted. Oscar Hammerstein's lyrics in "Carefully Taught" from *South Pacific* are razor sharp and accurate, 50 years after they were written:

You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
you've got to be taught from year to year,
to hate all the people your relatives hate,
you've got to be carefully taught.

Yes, we've got all kinds of progressive, compassionate legislation on our side. Bravo. But tell that to Ma and Pa and their children. Here's an example: Recently, a school superintendent in Saskatoon made numerous sexist, heterosexist, and homophobic "jokes" when addressing a gathering of teachers. Was this man assailed, ridiculed, and shamed into silence? No, his audience, with a minimal amount of obvious discomfort, laughed and seemed to condone his comments. You might expect that sort of reaction from a good old boys club meeting, but not from teachers, many of whom are parents themselves.

Here's another example: In the spring of 1997, there was a symposium held concerning gay issues in Saskatchewan. Numerous segments of our community were invited to be involved in the week-end's discussions, including education. On the morning of the panel discussions, no one would sit in the chair representing teachers in the

province. Not one person. I know the reason. It has nothing to do with there being no gay teachers in Saskatchewan (let me give you the l-o-n-g list sometime), it's just that those teachers know that a public appearance by a gay or lesbian teacher would pretty much end his or her teaching career in this province. Oh, they wouldn't and *couldn't* be fired just for being openly gay, but, likely, their life would become a series of "consultations" with someone in charge of that school system. The probable result being that the teacher would be made an offer he/she couldn't refuse: Surrender, Dorothy, or die. The unspoken, undocumented attitude of the collective school system here is that Mr. and Mrs. Saskatchewan don't want their son or daughter being

taught by an *openly* gay man or a lesbian. It's "don't ask, don't tell," Canadian style. It's the silence that is killing all of us as surely as those thugs killed Matthew Shepard in Wyoming.

I was told by a school superintendent a few years ago that teaching is, "all about marketing." With that progressive thinking, I can see how it would be difficult for a school system, chock-full of *openly* gay and lesbian teachers, to market itself to parents whose children are screaming "fag" and "you lesbian" at fellow students (and teachers, on occasion).

I would argue that the collective school systems are telling us, as teachers, not to force them to holler "fag" or "you lesbian" at us. It's like the old TV show, *The Incredible Hulk*. The hero (who turned into the Hulk) would always warn the bad guys not to make him angry or he'd turn into a giant, ugly green monster. I guess school systems couldn't market themselves to parents as having the potential to turn into the Incredible Hulk. Here's proof of that theory: An ad for a gay teacher's support group is now appearing in the Saskatchewan teacher's newspaper, *The Bulletin*. There is no phone number or even a local address, simply a note to contact GLHS if there is interest in the organization. Why is this a secret? The answer is because, officially, there are no openly gay or lesbian teachers in Saskatchewan and if there are, don't bother advertising the fact. It's as if it were an underground operation, like a shameful embarrassment to the profession. The truth is, there was some difficulty actually getting the ad placed in the first place. (More bad marketing potential.)

When will this stop? When are we going to stop allowing goons like those in Wyoming or those in charge of school systems, to obliterate us, either figuratively or metaphorically? When will it be okay for us to steadfastly and loudly tell the parents of those children that "fag" and "you lesbian" are as disgusting and sickening as calling someone a "kike" or a "wop"? When do we get to tell parents the truth about their child's teacher being "officially" gay, without it being cause for fear and panic (and a likely quick exit to another school)? When will people like Matthew Shepard stop being beaten to death before all of us say: That's it, no more, enough. It's time the death penalty for being gay is abolished for good. ▮

QUEERS IN THE SCHOOLS

(Saskatoon) The issue of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in the education system has been an active area in Saskatoon over the past few weeks. A number of conferences and initiatives have taken place to educate teachers and school board officials about the importance of addressing homophobia in the school system.

The first initiative was a Western Canada Diversity conference sponsored by the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation. The conference included three separate workshops which dealt with the issues surrounding gay people in the school system. A two-day simulation had educators from across Canada role-playing situations that arise in schools regarding diversity. While the workshop dealt with all issues of diversity, gay and lesbian issues were a prominent part of the simulation workshop. Gens Hellquist, from Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS), sat on a panel during the second day of the workshop, critiquing the deci-

sions made by participants in the various simulations.

During the next two days of the conference, staff from GLHS presented a workshop on gays and lesbians in the schools while Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays presented another workshop. GLHS also staffed an information table at the conference on gay and lesbian issues.

"The time is long overdue for the education system to examine ways they contribute to homophobia and heterosexism."

- Gens Hellquist

GLHS also presented a workshop at the recent Teacher's Institute in Saskatoon. This is the second year in a row that GLHS has discussed the issues of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students, teachers and staff in the school system. GLHS also had an information table at the Institute.

On March 12 and 13 the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan will be hosting the 2nd annual Breaking the Silence: Gays & Lesbians in the Schools conference. The conference provides a way for participants to learn about ways they can help bring about changes in the education system to make it safer for those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered.

The Breaking the Silence conference begins Friday March 12 at 7:15pm with an opening address by MP Svend Robinson. A reception will take place following Robinson's address. The conference is at the Education Building on campus, main floor near the front entrance, and people can

register Friday night or Saturday when the bulk of conference events occur. Everyone is welcome to attend the Friday reception to hear Robinson and to find out about the next day's events. Admission Friday is \$5.00.

"We're excited about all these activities," said Hellquist. "The time is long overdue for the education system to examine ways they contribute to homophobia and heterosexism and look at ways to bring about change. Many young people learn their homophobia during their school years and traditionally the education system has looked the other way and done nothing," Hellquist added.

GLHS is also meeting with two members of the Saskatoon Public School Board as well as the director of education. "We hope to impress upon them the realities of being gay or lesbian and part of the school system. It can often be a brutal experience for many of those involved," Hellquist said. "Our expectation is that they will take the necessary steps to make schools safe for all gay people."

This also the first time the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation has become involved in lesbian and gay issues. Over past years they have been silent on the issues but appear ready to begin addressing homophobia and its effects on people in the education system. A recent column by Jean Essen in their publication called for educators to respect gay people and work to make changes.

"There are many people within the education system who are committed to addressing homophobia," Hellquist said. "Unfortunately they seldom feel safe to do so because there has never been a clear message sent from those in administration that it is safe to deal with the issues and confront homophobia. We're optimistic that things are finally changing and that those in positions of authority and responsibility will finally take concrete steps to begin the healing that needs to occur for gay people and their supporters to feel safe in the system."

In many communities across the country the fight for lesbian and gay equality has moved into a new arena: the education system. This is the arena where ultimately the battle must be fought and a successful fight will see the end of homophobia as we know it today.

Children are certainly not born homophobic. It is not an innate characteristic of human beings although at times it does appear that way. I watched a wonderful video called *It's Elementary* which looks at ways teachers in some American schools address the issue of homophobia. One Quaker school actually holds a gay and lesbian Pride Day in their school, something I doubt most schools would be willing to embrace.

It was fascinating to observe the different attitudes exhibited by children as they get older. The kids in the early years of school seemed to be unable to comprehend the concept of homophobia. As one cute young fellow observed, "What's the big whoop. They love one another." Unfortunately, that attitude did not remain with the kids. As the kids got older they became more homophobic and by the time they were in high school they had developed very homophobic attitudes.

Certainly some homophobic attitudes are developed in the family but the school system is a major place where homophobia still thrives. The common taunts on the playground today are epithets like "fag," "lesbian," or "queer." Rarely do teachers confront these words used to label anyone who appears different in any way. Frequently, kids have no comprehension of what the words mean. They just know they are bad and the best way to hurt someone is to throw one of them at their enemy. "Oh, that's so gay" is another term used to label anything out of the ordinary.

The reasons why we must actively engage in the fight for changes to the education system to end homophobia are many. Not only is homophobia dangerous to kids who will turn out to be gay or lesbian, but also to kids who will turn out to be heterosexual. They learn early that being gay is different and a bad thing. They frequently take those attitudes with them into adulthood.

All one needs to do to realize how dire the situation is in our schools is to look at some of the statistics that have been collected: 97% of students in public high schools report regularly hearing homophobic remarks from their peers; 53% of students report hearing homophobic remarks made by school staff; 80% of prospective teachers report negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians; one third of prospective teachers can be classified as "high-grade homophobes;" 52% of prospective teachers report they would feel uncomfortable working with an open gay or lesbian colleague; 77% of prospective teachers would not encourage a class discussion on homosexuality; two thirds of guidance counsellors harbour negative feelings toward gays and lesbians; and only 25% of guidance counsellors consider themselves "highly competent" in serving gay and lesbian youth.

The common taunts on the playground today are epithets like "fag," "lesbian," or "queer."

It's no wonder gay and lesbian youth have such high rates of suicide when those who are supposed to educate them are incapable of dealing with issues of being gay and lesbian. Gay and lesbian youth face an outrageous rate of problems that include: a suicide rate three times higher; gay male adolescents are 14 times more likely to attempt suicide; 45% of gay males and 20% of lesbians report having experienced verbal and/or physical violence because of their orientation during high school; 19% of gay/lesbian youth report physical attacks based on their orientation; 28% of youth who drop out of school are gay or lesbian. And it just keeps going on and on.

In some cities, gay and lesbian organizations have begun the fight to have the education system adequately address homophobia and build schools that are safe

for gay and lesbian students and staff. Inevitably, the right-wing gets wind and mounts their senseless and vicious counter-attack.

In Surrey, the school board, which is comprised largely of fundamentalist Christians, banned three innocuous books which address the issue of kids with two same-gender parents. The books did not contain the words *gay*, *lesbian* or *sex* but rather discussed families that do not conform to the traditional '50s family of a working father and a stay-at-home mother. The Surrey board found the books so dangerous that they spent \$500,000 fighting to keep them out of their schools. They are now willing to spend at least another \$500,000 appealing the original decision which they lost. I'm glad to hear that the Surrey system is so flush with cash that they don't need to use it to educate kids, although their attitude is certainly sending a powerful message to kids in that system.

In Winnipeg, numerous groups have sprung up to fight the school board's recommendation that a committee be struck to investigate ways to address diversity and homophobia in that city's public school system. The board has been swamped by requests from groups to address the issue at public meetings. Fortunately, it appears that the majority of those requesting to address the issue are supportive, although at this point in time it is fairly even with those supporting and opposing the recommendation. One group opposed to the recommendation calls themselves Parents Against Heterophobia. I never knew heterophobia exists. I don't understand that, as some of my best friends are heterosexuals.

In Saskatoon, we have been working within the system to effect change and so far there hasn't been any backlash from the right-wing. Perhaps that's because we have tended to work in the background with administrators rather than approaching the board in a public way. I suspect it is only a matter of time before the fundamentalists hear about our initiatives and raise a public furore over it.

The charge that is always levelled is that we are promoting homo-

(Continues on next page)

sexuality. Now I've been out for over 33 years and a gay activist for 28 years and I still don't know how one promotes homosexuality. I've never seen it as something that can be promoted. It is simply a fact of life. You're gay, bisexual or not. Perhaps those people are confusing it with religion, which is something that *they* like to promote. They want to ensure that no one promotes anything that is contrary to their narrow views on life and spirituality.

In my naivety, I've always believed that the education system exists to teach people about the realities of life and to provide people with information about how the world operates. When it comes to human sexuality, schools seem very reluctant to deal with the issue and that reluctance has had a drastic impact on the lives of all gay men and

lesbians.

We must continue to pressure the education system to enter the 20th century and address the issues surrounding the diversity of human sexuality in open and honest ways. We must counter those dark forces that would see the education system continue to support their hate and bigotry; if they continue to win we will all continue to lose. Without a change in our schools we cannot hope to see significant changes in the attitudes that still leave many gay and lesbian people in peril. Legal victories around things like spousal rights are well and good, but as long as attitudes remain the way they are we will continue to see the epidemic levels of health and social issues that exist in our communities. Education is the key to equality. [P]

SCHOOL BOARD FURORE

(Winnipeg) The public school board in this Manitoba city has found itself in the middle of a furore over the issue of homophobia in the school system. The issue began when a delegation of high school students went to the board asking them to address the issue of homophobia in Winnipeg schools.

Recently elected board member Kristine Barr, who is an open lesbian, presented a motion calling for a study of the issue of diversity and homophobia in the schools. The motion, which passed by a 7-2 margin, called for a committee to be struck with three terms of reference. The committee would develop information for division employees and the general public regarding the need for diversity education in the schools. It was also charged with identifying those areas of the education system where anti-homophobia education may be appropriate. The third area the committee will look after is reviewing existing diversity and anti-homophobia training or policy that are in place in other jurisdictions in North America.

It wasn't long after the motion passed that the furore erupted. Numerous groups came forward to voice their opposition including a group calling themselves Parents Against Heterophobia. At the following board meeting, 30 delegations made presentations on the issue. Seventeen of those presentations supported the motion to address homophobia. The rest complained that the motion was an attempt to "promote homosexuality" in the schools.

The Winnipeg board provides an opportunity for public to make presentations every second meeting so the issue is not about to go away soon. There were 68 delegations who asked to appear before the board to address the motion. The next open meeting is slated for May 11.

Donna Yuen, of the Winnipeg Lesbian and Gay Resource Centre, said the furore has put a huge crimp in their project that they just started working on. That two-year project received funding from Health Canada to speak in schools about homophobia and the issues that arise from it. "Now most schools are reluctant to touch us with all this going on," said Yuen. She added that her group is now focusing on forming coalitions to lobby and strategize on how to address the vicious homophobia that has become visible because of the motion.

TEACHING TEACHERS

(Winnipeg) The Winnipeg School's Division One has been embroiled in controversy for the past year over their plans to address homophobia in their school system. Last year the Division board approved a plan to investigate ways to address homophobia in all areas of the school system. That decision sparked a huge and well-organized protest from religious and conservative groups and individuals in the city.

For four months last spring the board heard presentations from various groups and individuals over the issues of gays and lesbians in the school and their plans to address the homophobia those gay and lesbian students and staff faced. The meetings were usually raucous with a chorus of right wing voices warning about the perils of dealing with homophobia in the education system. Many of the voices, frequently from non-gay students, were supportive of the boards efforts to find ways to end or alleviate homophobia in the schools.

The school board stuck to their principles and continued developing resources to address homophobia. In January, Tim McCaskell from the Student Equity Branch of the Toronto School Board held a workshop for administrators in the system. The workshop included a panel of lesbian and gay youth providing their input on the problems and solutions. Speakers from the Rainbow Resource Centre were also part of the presentations.

This month the Board contracted with the Rainbow Resource Centre to participate in a number of 1/2 day seminars for high school staff on homophobia. The training is mandatory for all school staff including non-teaching staff such as clerical and custodial staff. All staff will participate in one of the workshops which are scheduled to wrap up before the end of school term in June.

Centre coordinator Donna Huen said the Centre's role will be to make a one-hour presentation on the myths surrounding gay men and lesbians as well

as on issues like terminology. They have also been asked to screen an 18 minute video with a youth panel discussing the ramifications of homophobia. The half-day workshops will also include presentations from lawyers who will look at the legal ramifications of not addressing the needs of lesbian and gay students and staff.

Huen acknowledges that while she is pleased by this first step by the school board, she also doesn't see it being adequate to deal with the problems. "It's really great stuff but wasn't what we hoped for," Huen said. "It's really just a drop in the bucket." She expects that staff attending the workshops will realize that they will need more time to learn about all the issues and develop strategies to address those issues. She questions whether the resources will be made available to continue the education of staff about the complexities of homophobia.

Next year the workshops will be made available to teachers and support staff in the elementary and middle schools. The Centre has already conducted workshops for the systems community liaison staff.

The Fort Garry School board is also considering following the example of the Winnipeg Division 1 board and implementing anti-homophobia programs in their schools. Those plans are still in the preliminary stages.

SAME-SEX BENEFITS

(Saskatoon) At their April conference the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF) overwhelmingly supported a resolution providing same-sex spousal benefits. The resolution was tabled at the conference by Prince Albert teachers. The resolution, which passed with 75% support, effectively amended the STF's benefit plan as of April 23 to provide benefits for same-sex couples.

STF president Doug Willard says it's an issue that cannot be ignored. "We think it's the law. It's already been established in court cases and we're sure the Constitution will say we have to do that," he said. "So there's no point dragging our feet and running away from it.

"It's a step in the right direction to see that finally the STF recognizes that there are many gay and lesbian teachers in the province," said Rae, a member of Gay and Lesbian Teachers of Saskatchewan. "Now we would really like to see them establish a task force to look at the specific issues gay and lesbian teachers face in the system," he added. "And we would like the expected recommendations to be addressed."

MEANWHILE, IN SASKATOON...

(Saskatoon) The public school board in this city is also looking at ways to address homophobia in their schools. An ad-hoc committee began meeting this fall to look at the problems associated with homophobia in the schools and to recommend ways to address those problems. The committee was established by director of education Ivan Yackel, although board members are aware of the committee.

Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) executive director Gens Hellquist, along with PFLAG member Kay Williams, addressed the committee at their November meeting. "It appears that this committee is serious about the issues," said Hellquist. "However, I do have concerns that there is no gay or lesbian person on their committee and I don't believe they would look at racism issues without having visible minorities on the committee."

The committee has been unable to find a lesbian or gay teacher willing to out themselves by sitting on the committee. "That is certainly a sign that things need to change," Hellquist said.

The committee will hold their next meeting in December at GLHS. It's not known, at this date, when they will be ready to present their recommendations to the administration and the board.

EDITORIAL

I'm continually amazed over how easy it can be to effect change at times. A recent excursion into rural Saskatchewan in June pointed that out clearly.

At Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) we've been talking with a young dyke in that rural community. She has been having trouble finding support for who she is and didn't feel the environment was safe at all. After a year of talking with her and providing support over the phone she finally disclosed to a counsellor in her school and received a positive response. However, she was still fearful of other students in her school discovering her secret.

In June we received a phone call from the principal of the school she attends. The principal wanted someone to come out and talk to students in the school about gay and lesbian issues. So in June Charlotte Huculak, the youth worker at GLHS, and myself ventured out into rural Saskatchewan. We were told that the school was predominately Aboriginal as the community was situated between two reserves.

We were ushered into the school library and watched as most of the grade 10, 11 and 12 students shuffled into the room and took a seat. It's always difficult to determine reactions to our presentations until we are well into them. Will our audience sit there and say nothing? Will they reject what we have to say?

We spent 90 minutes talking about queer issues and answering the usual range of questions. Most of the questions come from the girls as the boys seem afraid to ask questions and sit whispering to one another. Some of the students talked about a 10-year-old boy in the school who likes to cross-dress and tends to be the butt of many jokes at the school.

A week after we returned to Saskatoon we received another call from the young dyke we had been supporting over the phone for the past year. She was excited about the change that had taken place in the school. One of the female students, who heatedly insisted 2-Spirit people hadn't been respected in traditional culture, had asked the young caller on a date. The young boy who had been the butt of jokes was now being treated with respect and supported. The climate at the school had been changed dramatically all because a principal and counsellor decided it was time to bring lesbian and gay issues out into the open in their school.

We've been invited back in the fall to talk to the new crop of students at that school. I'm excited about that visit.

CLASSROOM CLOSET

(Winnipeg) A Winnipeg teacher has applied to the Supreme Court to have her appeal of a lower court ruling overturned. The case centres around whether a teacher should be allowed to disclose their sexual orientation, when appropriate, in the classroom.

In 1995 Gale M'Lot informed her superiors that she was going to disclose the fact she is a lesbian at appropriate moments in her classroom. She felt it was a professional courtesy, "in case it was the subject of gossip" once the revelation had been made.

School board management was quick to inform M'Lot that "under no circumstances was it appropriate to mention her sexual orientation, regardless of what it might be." M'Lot was stunned by the decision and went to her union, the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) who filed a grievance on M'Lot's part. Two years later arbitrators felt it wasn't within their jurisdiction and said management had made a valid decision.

"The hearings said that the course content was sufficient and there was no need to stray from the curriculum," M'Lot said. "The school division feels that I should stick to it and that me being a lesbian has nothing to do with it."

M'Lot and the MTS took the case to the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench which ruled that the teacher had the right to grieve the decision and instructed the two parties to begin a new arbitration process. The school division took that decision to the Manitoba Court of Appeal

who ruled, in a split decision, that the decision of the school board was not subject to grievance as the collective agreement did not address the whole issue of "coming out."

M'Lot and the MTS then decided to ask the Supreme Court for the right to have their case heard. The MTS has agreed to support and finance the case before the highest court. "The submission to the Supreme Court concerns the right, for me or anyone else, to grieve when management makes a unilateral decision," M'Lot said. If the Court agrees to take the case they will only address the issue of whether M'Lot has the right to grieve.

M'Lot, who's been teaching for over 20 years, said she had previously dodged the issue of her sexual orientation when it came up in class. Her decision to change that came about as a result of meeting a former student at a lesbian club in Winnipeg. That student told M'Lot that her life would have been so much easier if she would have known that M'Lot was a lesbian. M'Lot was bothered by that conversation and decided it was important for her to disclose her lesbianism in appropriate situations in the classroom.

M'Lot knows that even though she's not allowed to be out that her being a lesbian is not a huge secret. She has had "Dyke" written across her car in the school parking lot and she spoke about her plight at the Gay Pride Rally in Winnipeg in June. However, she is unable to disclose that she's a lesbian and thereby provide a gay role model for her students.

M'Lot expects that it will be a few years yet before the issue is finally settled and the gag order is lifted.

SUPPORTING OUR YOUTH

(Saskatoon) For the past two years Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) has sponsored a Safe School Project to address the issues of homophobia in the education system. The committee is comprised of teachers, guidance counsellors, youth workers, GLHS staff, students, parents of gay and lesbian kids and other concerned individuals. It meets monthly to discuss and plan initiatives to build safer schools for gay, lesbian and bisexual students and teachers.

This year the committee has decided to work at developing and supporting Gay-Straight Alliances in some Saskatoon high schools. Gay-Straight Alliances have been developed in many American schools and the movement is just beginning in Canada. In some cities the student groups have been so controversial that school districts have banned all school clubs to prevent Gay-Straight Alliances from using school facilities.

"We don't expect the issue to be as controversial in Saskatoon as it has been in some American cities," said GLHS executive director Gens Hellquist. "However, the committee believes strongly that support systems must be developed in schools to allow queer students and staff

to feel safe and we're clear that this is an important initiative. We also know that human rights legislation is on our side so we won't be deterred by any attempts to stop us providing support for gay, lesbian and bisexual students."

The Alliances are basically support groups that bring together gay and non-gay students to support one another and to find ways to address homophobia in their school. "Our education system is one of the most dangerous places for queer people to be," said Hellquist, "and we are dedicated to seeing changes occur so that people can obtain a good education, or work, in a safe environment."

The Safe School Project has also been involved in other initiatives including working with Prof. Don Cochrane from the College of Education on the "Breaking The Silence: Gays & Lesbian In The Schools" conference held each March. GLHS also met with the former director of education of the Saskatoon Public School system and encouraged him to establish an Ad Hoc Advisory to look at ways to address homophobia in the system's schools. That report was completed last June but has not yet been made available. "We suspect that with a new director of education and a new school board elected that everyone is getting settled in before releasing the report," said Hellquist. "However, we will be approaching them soon and asking where the report is," he added.

Hellquist said they expect to have the first Gay-Straight Alliance group operating soon into the new year. As yet they are not sure which high school in Saskatoon will host the first group.

TEACHING OK, ADOPTING NOT

(Saskatoon) Saskatchewan's two major newspapers, along with researchers at the University of Saskatchewan, conducted a poll of Saskatchewan residents late in 2000. The poll asked respondents questions about a number of issues including attitudes towards sex and sexuality.

A few of the questions asked were on gay and lesbian issues. Only 24% of respondents said that they were bothered "that openly gay or lesbian people are teaching in schools." Approximately 57% said it does not bother them that openly gay or lesbian teachers are teaching in schools. "Reaching the 57% mark is dramatic," said Professor Don Cochrane, who is head of the department of educational foundations at the U of S and who also teaches a course on gay issues in education.

Cochrane also pointed out that he was unaware of any gay or lesbian teachers in Saskatchewan who felt comfortable enough to be open about their orientation. Cochrane added that gays are still reluctant to come out in the education system even though Human Rights legislation provides protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. "Teachers feel they must stay in the closet either because they fear their administration or they fear their communities," Cochrane added. "They are not in a position of equality with respect to their jobs."

The poll also asked for opinions on gays and lesbians adopting children. Fifty-five percent of those surveyed felt that gay couples should not be able to adopt children. It's a peculiar contradiction," said Cochrane, referring to the different figures regarding teaching children and adopting them.

Gens Hellquist, executive director of Gay & Lesbian Health Services, said he suspects the adoption figures come about because of a lack of information. "Numerous studies conducted over the past few years clearly show that children who grow up in gay or lesbian households are as well, and in some cases, better adjusted than kids growing up in traditional

households. The other reality that people aren't aware of is that most adoptions in the gay and lesbian community involved a partner in a same-sex relationship adopting his or her spouse's biological children."

The survey published in the two papers in January also indicated that only 2% of the respondents admitted to having sexual activities with someone of the same sex. "Those figures are all out of whack," said Hellquist. "The general consensus is that approximately 10% of the population is predominantly gay or lesbian. It just shows you how much people lie about issues of sex and how uncomfortable people feel about admitting in anonymous surveys that they're gay, lesbian or bisexual."

BUILDING ALLIANCES

(Red Deer) Over the past few years many high schools in the United States have formed Gay/Straight Alliance groups to help support gays and lesbians in those schools and to combat homophobia. The concept is still relatively new in Canada, with only a handful of schools having similar groups. Lindsay Thurber High in this central Alberta city, home of Alliance leader Stockwell Day, has become one of the latest high schools to form a Gay/Straight Alliance.

The group has been meeting over the past few months and according to Darren Lund, the group's co-ordinator, 25 to 30 students attended meetings after the formation of the group. Lund says students participating in the group are not required to declare whether they are gay, lesbian or straight. "I was quite overwhelmed," Lund says. "I like the fact that the students run the meetings. They're a lot more sensitive to the issue than I am," he added.

Lund says the high school prides itself on its diversity, but too many students still tolerate discrimination and homophobic comments directed at gays and lesbians. The group came about after the administration, along with six students, confronted another student group about their unwillingness to address homophobia in the school.

Rachel Evans, a member of the group, says many openly gay and lesbian students at Thurber have been harassed and threatened. "I hope this group will promote acceptance... as well as a safe place for gay, lesbian and transgendered kids to go and talk about their problems," Evans said.

Danielle Proudlock, a Grade 12 student, said she joined because no one seemed willing to take a stance against homophobia in the school. She recalled watching in horror as a group of students taunted another student with chants of "faggot" when he did drag for the school's Halloween party in 1999. "It's just disgusting that nobody wants to do anything about that," she says.

Lund says the group is important because

people must learn to respect gay teachers, students and straight kids with gay parents. He said it is still difficult for lesbian and gay teachers to be out in Red Deer. "They may have a legitimate fear because of the professional risk," he said. "Just a couple years ago it was still legal to be fired because you were suspected of being gay," he added.

SAFE RESIDENCE

(Saskatoon) The University of Saskatchewan Student's Union Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, (LGB) Centre has called for the creation of a positive living environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered students and their non-gay allies at the University of Saskatchewan. The proposed residence would help address the incidences of harassment and discrimination based on perceived sexual orientation that have been reported to the Centre.

The proposal, called the '2 in 20 Program,' asks the University to designate a cluster of rooms for LGBT and LGBT-friendly students in one of the campus residences. "The '2 in 20 Program' would create a positive living environment and supportive residential community for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered students," said Ryan Whyley, director of the LGB Centre. "The program also calls for sensitivity training for all residents and staff at university residences to end the homophobia and harassment faced by students."

Whyley believes the program could serve as a symbolic gesture of support from the university in meeting the housing needs of LGBT students. The proposal is modeled on a successful program operating at the University of Massachusetts.

"Students are living with threats of violence," Whyley said. "It's really quite a threatening environment. The harassment that goes on in residence is unacceptable," he added.

One gay male, who lived at the Sheptytsky Institute, said he was constantly harassed

when rumours spread about him being gay. One night, people started banging on the wall outside his room, yelling "Hey, wake up gay guy!" The following day he complained to the dorm manager who did nothing.

There have been many reports of name calling, vandalism and graffiti in Voyageur Place and STM's Ogle Hall with some students receiving threats of violence. One student who lived in residence for three years said he complained after hearing comments such as, "If I ever found out there was a gay person living here, I'd beat the shit out of them."

Students say usually nothing is done when complaints about harassment are lodged with the university. Neil Nickels, the manager of Voyageur Place, says he hasn't received any complaints of harassment and doesn't see it as a problem.

Whyley is proposing that a floor of one of the residences be designated as a 'gay, lesbian, bisexual and their allies' floor. That way the students would have others around them who are supportive. He also wants all staff working in the residences to have sensitivity training around gay issues.

Whyley hopes the program will be in place by next fall, although some university officials still don't see the need for the safe residence space. Vera Pezer, Associate VP, is acting as a mediator on the issues and questions Whyley's solution to the problem. "How do you teach tolerance to people by separating yourself from those who are intolerant towards you?" Her solution to the problem is more education around homophobia.

EDITORIAL

Often when I'm going through material looking for copy for *PERCEPTIONS* I run across a story that disturbs me. A recent example is the story of Jamie Lazarre, an 18-year-old high student in Prince George who could no longer endure the taunts and harassment he faced as a young gay man. He chose to hang himself, believing life in a homophobic environment just isn't worth it.

It brings me to tears and angers me greatly when I hear of young queer people, or not so young queer people, who see the only route out from under the hate and intolerance as suicide. In 2002 in Canada it should not be happening and we must not stand for it any longer. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed us equality 20 years ago. That is not the case for queer youth.

Jamie Lazarre is only one of approximately 1,000 queer people each year who opt to kill themselves because they can see no other escape from the pain they experience as a result of homophobia. Most die in silence with no one having a sense of why they chose to take their life. Jamie left a suicide note but many don't leave any visible explanation for their actions. It is a situation that we must no longer accept and speak out forcefully about.

We must hold school boards, administrators and teachers accountable for providing a safe environment where our youth can feel safe and accepted. Schools must be environments where our youth can learn and feel good about who they are. Many more of our youth drop out of school before graduating because they can not survive in a climate where they feel inferior and have concerns about their safety. Those kids are often doomed to a life of under-employment. Perhaps more of us should be running for election as a school trustee.

Perhaps we should make 2002 The Year of Queer Youth and dedicate ourselves to changing the environment in which they must live and receive an education. Hell, we should make every year The Year of Queer Youth until school is as safe and welcoming for our youth as it is for other youth.

Once again this publication finds itself behind the 8-ball when it comes to finances. Summer is often a difficult time for us as people are away on holidays and neglect to renew subscriptions or send a donation. We have always survived with the support of our readers and advertisers. We would ask that you not forget us as we still must pay the printer, postage and shipping to get each issue into your hands.

How Much Are The Times A-CHANGING?

by Gens Hellquist

At times I'm reminded of how much the situation has changed for queer people and then something else occurs that reminds me of how much work we still have to do. The situation of queer youth is a classic example.

When we first started our youth group at Gay & Lesbian Health Services over ten years ago, I would often receive phone calls from irate parents threatening all kinds of nasty things being visited on me because I was corrupting their children. Apparently, providing a support group for queer youth somehow threatened their children, although I suspect what it threatened was their narrow little view of the world. I no longer get those hateful phone calls and now what I often see is parents who come up to our organization to check out if it safe enough for their gay or lesbian kid.

Recently, we had a mother of a 12-year-old boy come in to check us out and see if we were good enough for her son. We must have passed the mother test because she is allowing him to attend our youth group. He is a remarkable young man and he gives me encouragement that we are indeed making progress.

Watching him get involved in our organization, I find myself wondering how different my life might have been if I could have found a supportive group when I was 12 and struggling with my identity. I also find myself wondering how many roadblocks will still be in place for this young man as he navigates adolescence. He's still in elementary school and has yet to face the homophobic environment of our high schools. Will he survive that ordeal essentially intact? He's a bright and capable young man but the perils for queer youth in high school are still very real.

Before the year is out there will be a Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) operating in at least one Saskatoon high school. That will provide some degree of safety for queer youth as well as youth who have gay and lesbian parents. But how many will actually feel safe enough to attend the group? There are fourteen high schools in Saskatoon and how many of those schools will have progressive enough principals to allow the formation of GSAs in their schools? It's unlikely the six Catholic high schools will be supportive of such groups in their facilities, knowing how the Pope feels about queers.

I also know that queer youth who live in smaller centres are even less likely to be able to access any type of support system, let alone a GSA. What will they face in their journey through adolescence? How many of them will decide the only way to end the torment is to kill themselves? Will they be one of the 27% of school dropouts who are gay or lesbian?

At GLHS we've been trying to locate funding that will allow us to

work at developing support systems for queer youth outside of Saskatoon. After applying to eight foundations and three or four government funding streams for such a project, we still haven't been able to secure any funding. They've all turned us down. However, we are hopeful that we will be able to secure some funding shortly. At least, that is what we have been informed by one government department. However, we know that the \$15,000 to \$20,000 we are likely to receive from that funding stream will not allow us to go very far. Saskatchewan is a huge province, with queer youth spread out over a vast expanse.

It also seems to me that more queer young people are falling victim to brutal gay-bashings. Over the last few months I have heard of a number of brutal assaults, including rapes, that were clearly based on the sexual orientation of the victim. Maybe it's just that those assaults are becoming more visible or people are reporting them more often

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth are coming out at younger ages and in increasing numbers. My concern is whether we have put enough support systems in place to make their journey out a safe one. I don't think so. In talking to members of our youth group I still hear chilling stories about suicide attempts, and often multiple attempts, or vicious assaults in school or in their communities.

Yes, things have changed for queer youth but it's still a minority of our youth who feel safe enough to come out during their adolescence, which is the time of life when heterosexual youth are allowed to deal with issues of dating, relationships, sex and sexuality. It should also be the time in life when queer kids have the opportunity to deal with those normal things of growing up and determining who they are. However, that is not the case.

My adolescence was not an easy time, growing up in the '50s and '60s when sex was seldom talked about, let alone homosexuality. I know that experience has had a negative impact on my life. Like most queer people I was robbed of the opportunity to experience those normal things that adolescents go through. That period of life is a crucial phase in our development as healthy human beings. We get robbed of that opportunity although we may get the opportunity to learn those lessons at a later stage in life. However, that's not how it should be.

As a community we need to redouble our efforts to change the situation for our youth. They represent our future and the future of our community that will hopefully nurture us in our senior years. I'd like to think that the remarkable 12-year-old who's attending our youth group represents a new generation that will not experience the pain of homophobia that those of us who are older have. I'm not convinced that will be the case, which is a shame. ■

RURAL AND SMALL TOWN/SMALL CITY LIFE

Down on the Farm	P16 [1985]: 10
Prince Albert: A Gay Trek to Prince Albert	P20 [1985]: 3-4
Rural Connections	P40 (April 13/88): 26
Queer in Moose Jaw	P81 (June 9/93): 13
Gay in L.A. [i.e., Lethbridge, Alberta]	P87 (March 9/94): 9
From Isolation to Community	P88 (April 27/94): 7
Out in Saskatchewan	P91 (Sept. 14/94): 12
Pride in Southern Alberta [Medicine Hat]	P96 (April 26/95): 9
Out in the Country	P108 (Oct. 23/96): 8
From Where I Sit [opinion piece, portion of which is account of author's youth in small Manitoba city]	P110 (Jan. 29/97): 5
Coming Out on the Prairies	P114 (July 30/97): 6-7
Increased Visibility [regarding AIDS Moose Jaw]	P116 (Oct. 22/97): 12
Northern Pride [Thompson, Manitoba]	P132 (Oct. 27/99): 11



DOWN ON THE FARM IN SASKATCHEWAN

I am a young gay male residing in the depths of rural Saskatchewan. The implications of this combination are, shall we say, troublesome. As anyone from Turtleford, Plunkett or Ravenscrag knows, the salient feature of small-town life is the back-fence chatter; everyone knows everything about everyone else. We are, according to the mayor of my town, a "happy civic family" -- as if my present family was not enough to contend with.

I would not object to this extension of my kinship if I really did want to honour the local conventions of respectability. But I don't.

We do, however, have our defiant personalities out here. The town drunk is reputed to have poisoned his wife, and everyone knows just how loose the woman who runs the coffee-shop is. They are pariahs; people wink and chuckle about them. I myself almost joined that elite when I became the only boy in school to take piano lessons. That was years ago, but recently, in a moment of heroic elan I decided to wear my pink shirt to work: not to do.

To be gay in Saskatoon or Regina must be a state approaching nirvana. One has control over which persons know what facts about oneself. As well, in the city, there are gay bars and other social or political groups for meeting. One can buy gay-oriented books and magazines, or borrow them from the library, and there are educational films to see and even porn videos to rent. Most importantly, one can so casually call or meet one's gay friends any time.

In a small town, by contrast, there is almost none of this available, and what might be

available cannot be had in confidence. I would not dare to take out a book on homosexuality from the local library even if there was one there to take. It would be impossible to discreetly subscribe to a gay magazine, and the drugstore in my fundamentalist town hardly stocks them. And for me to rent some relevant entertainment from the video shop would be socially suicidal. Even my phone calls from my gay city-friends must be content-restricted because I am on a party-line and I know the neighbour listens in on every call.

Stories of bucolic romance with afternoons of dreamy creekside lovemaking are pure myth. And quick sex? Look, we don't even have public washrooms. I don't have gay friends where I live, although I am quite sure that there must be others around like myself. No one of us would dare to confide his being gay to even his otherwise closest friends, so contacts are not made. Perhaps lonely gays are together every day at work or in the slow-pitch league, but they may never know that the next man to them is a potential ally. I once thought about being a little more cavalier about self-disclosure, but then I thought again: I don't think my parents or my junior high siblings would appreciate the inevitable social fallout.

I don't plan to commune with the gophers forever, but until I move there, I will confine my gay existence to the occasional weekend in the city. Thank God it's only a three-hour drive!

T.R.

[The above article was submitted by a PERCEPTIONS reader. We encourage our readership to contribute to the magazine: it is yours. The Collective.]

PRINCE ALBERT

A GAY TREK TO PRINCE ALBERT

Is there life in Prince Albert? Knowing you have always wanted to know the answer to this question, we made it our mission to trek to this great Northern centre. To our great surprise we indeed found life but not without considerable difficulty.

Prince Albert Gay Community Centre is located at #1 - 24 10th Street. However locating the elusive #24 was a feat much easier said than done. Our first attempt found us inadvertently barging into the confines of an AA meeting. We quickly realized this was not 'Gay Heaven' when we saw that all the men were plump and too draply dressed to be our brethren. Besides there was no booze in sight and it was so quiet that you could actually hear yourself think.

Using our combined Sherlock Holmes skills we guessed where the elusive #24 probably was. Then summoning up all of our bravery we tiptoed into a shadowy back alley and found an unmarked door. Upon entering the apartment building we came upon suite #1. We buzzed tentatively and were greatly relieved to be greeted by someone who assured us that we had indeed found the Gay Community Centre.

We didn't know what to expect but it sure wasn't this. The establishment must be the smallest Community Centre on earth. It used to be a bachelor suite - one room with a

bathroom. The furnishings consisted of an old fridge to store the beer, a small stereo tucked in the back, an eclectic collection of 'older' furniture to sit on and a tall table which served as a bar. The word which sums up the place is tiny.

Vick and Bob are the hosts of this non-profit establishment. They have spent six years keeping this centre alive. Various new customers have come along but the centre has not grown as gay men don't seem to stay in P.A. long. The gay population that does remain tends to be closeted because of fear of being known in a small town setting. The only reason the centre still exists is because of Bob and Vick's courage and loyalty. Their genuine warmth and bizarre humour, along with the homey atmosphere of the club make this place distinctively appealing.

The club is intimate. It has to be. After we arrived a gradual trickle of customers eventually led to nine of us being clustered around the table. Because everyone was gathered in such close proximity, conversation seemed to flow naturally. All the locals apparently knew one another well. Anyone could and did open the fridge to serve the beer. The music was a combination tapes and records on hand, complemented by contributions from

3

the clientele. The music volume was subdued enough to allow conversation. Vick and Bob did not dominate the discussion but their supportive concern for people was always evident.

Although the P.A. club cannot be directly compared to a larger club like Saskatoon's we found that it had a distinctive friendliness and conviviality. The club is close knit but we were not made to feel like outsiders. Indeed the members indicated that they liked

to receive visitors. (The facility is usually open Wednesday through Saturday evenings.) The club's no frills setting was therefore inconsequential when one takes into account the friendly attitudes of the local people.

Yes Virginia there is gay life in Prince Albert. The life may not be on a grand scale but life there is. We definitely encourage others with a spirit of adventure to follow in our footsteps to Prince Albert!

Bruce & Larry

RURAL CONNECTIONS

My isolation in rural Saskatchewan as a woman-loving-woman has been reduced today with the arrival of PERCEPTIONS. It's Saturday--a day off--so I can enjoy the warming sunshine streaming through my living room window while I curl up on my sofa with a handful of outside news and a cup of tea.

Rural closeted life is something I have chosen quite willingly because the positive aspects of it far outweigh the possibly more open but hectic city life. Cheap housing, a good satisfying job, quiet pace, high teacher/student ratio for my child at school, very friendly heterosexual people (many who have drawn me into their families) are all reasons that I stay here and enjoy life.

When I get tired of not being able to be 100% me, I head for the city and envelope myself in women-loving arms. At a recent Regina dance where I estimate 40 women were in attendance (that's 80 potential arms and 80 breasts) I hugged dykes for the first time in 47 days. I dare say that city dykes don't let themselves go that long without a warm touch. I heard petty complaints about poor attendance and a wish for different music. I didn't care. I loved it. Normally I'm a very anti-smoke person but that night I tolerated the discomfort along with a migraine headache just so I could absorb all the warm and tingly feelings of the short evening. So many new faces to gaze at, a few friends to catch up on the latest news--all so precious in such a short time. An invitation to brunch the next day had me step into a normal gay household where we discussed, amongst other things, raising teenagers. We shared our goals and achievements, our limits and

our flexabilities and how we heal after pain. This I cannot get back home--unless dykes come for a visit.

I go for days with no dyke contact--then I hit Regina one weekend and Saskatoon the next. It's almost too much of a shock but I can be tough--I can handle it! The quiet conversations in women's homes where kids wander in and out, the restaurant meals with women and the conversation not hushed, the Deborah Romeyn concert and dance in a "real" lounge, more connections with women I haven't seen in a long while are all remembered. In the women's washroom, two pairs of hiking boots are intertwined in the stall next to mine and hushed voices waft over. Gazes exchanged on the dance floor are contagious--the air is filled with total freedom and promises of intimacy later on. I don't think about going home--not yet. The last hugs of the weekend are more lengthy, attached to good wishes and promises to connect before the isolation gets unbearable.

On the way home time flies as I re-live the weekend. I'm just above being smothered by the smells, tastes and touches of the weekend. A complete white-out snow storm and an unplanned night in a motel room didn't shake or rattle the good vibes.

I walk into work on time and exchange greetings with the folks back home. They often imagine I'm off having it on with men on these trips out of town. I let them believe that. I believe what I know.

Jennifer

QUEER IN MOOSE JAW

(Moose Jaw) Lesbian and gay pride has come to this Saskatchewan city of approximately 30,000 people. Gays and lesbians have traditionally travelled the 75 kms to Regina to socialize with others only to return to a rather closeted life in Moose Jaw. That situation is about to change with the formation of a new group in the city.

The group, which doesn't have a name yet, has approximately 80 people associated with it. Their first activity will be a pride celebration, "It's In To Be Out In Moose Jaw", on June 19 and 20. A dance is being held at the Elk's Lodge on June 19 with a picnic the next day at the Happy Valley Park (See Calendar for details).

One of the organizers, Blanche, says the events are in honour of her mother who, before her death last year, requested that there be a pride celebration in Moose Jaw.

The group is encouraging all friends, family and supporters to celebrate with them and "be yourself". It's expected that contingents from Saskatoon and Regina will be in Moose Jaw to help kick off the new group and celebrate the first ever lesbian and gay pride days in that city.

Lethbridge seems like any other city. It has a little of everything the bigger cities have. What it lacks are traffic jams, rampant crime, and tolerance. Southern Alberta is known for its sunshine, wind and agriculture. But there is little tolerance for anything different. Two phrases seem to fit: "Status Reversus" and "Xenophobia". *Status Reversus* typifies the mentality here. What was good 25 years ago is fine for today. The "leaders" lead by looking over their shoulders at what used to be not what could be and end up running around in circles afraid of their own tails. *Xenophobia* because there is a distinct fear of anything out of the "norm". There are no people with green hair, no open prostitutes, few people have tattoos (unless you're at the biker bar). And, of course, there are no *homosexuals* in Southern Alberta. Not here in the Bible Belt. No. Nope. Uh uh.

Well, I am here. And I am tired of not existing. There is an "underground" Gay Community in Lethbridge. They put on social events such as the Red and White dance held February 12, hosted by the Lighthouse Social Club. It was a wonderful gala event. Until recently, I have not participated with my community. To be honest, I did not feel safe about it. But this year has changed that for me. I am comfortable in my own sexuality and I am no longer as afraid as I used to be. I would be naive and stupid to have no fear at all as there are plenty of things to be truly afraid of. So, I have now become involved and I am kicking myself for not doing it sooner.

I live my life quietly, minding my own business. I am not a political activist. I am just a normal person, student, son, or friend that happens to be gay. *Gay* is not a dirty word for me anymore. I have loving, understanding, and supportive family and friends. It is because of them that I decided to make a positive move to show my support for my community. Lethbridge has two post-secondary education institutions: Lethbridge Community College and the University of Lethbridge. Together, they make up around 10% of the city's entire population. Young people with a dream of getting a higher, enlightened

education. Other campus groups have their voices: Latter Day Saints, Mormons, Christians, International Students, etc. But there was a void where gays are concerned. And there are a lot of us down here! There are also a great many more people who would love to be supportive of us as well!

I took it upon myself to start an organization to support us! It is called GLABSA (Gay, Lesbian, And Bisexual Students and their Allies). This is the first campus group in Alberta to formally recognize Allies as part of their mandate. The reaction so far has been quite warm. I do expect that there will be some mixed reactions in the future, however. GLABSA is an inclusive organization formally ratified by the Students' Union. We are officially recognized as a viable, productive student club like any other on campus. Only students can be official members but staff, faculty and other community allies are strongly invited to become associate members.

My concern is to get GLABSA off the ground and running on its own steam as this is my last semester here at the U of L. But I feel it is the best time to start something this controversial. I will take the heat and then, by the time I leave, it should be a future fixture to recognize and be comfortable with. The trouble is that people are not comfortable. I am hoping to get a great many people involved with it. I have a lot of support on campus both by other gays and my fiercely devoted friends. It was one of my friends, Taz, who really helped me get this out of the starting block. Through her support and love, we finally got it going!

We have four main objectives as outlined in our functional constitution: (1) promoting of interaction of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students and their allies in a safe, comfortable, and non-threatening environment; (2) providing, through that interaction, an increased awareness of diversity issues at the U of L and in society at large; (3) allowing that awareness to educate, inform, and promote an understanding of diversity; and (4) employing

that understanding to try to abolish the stereotypes, negativity, and hostility evident in the general society.

I have always believed that I, myself, can not change the world. But I can have influence over my own little corner of it. The thing is that our friends are probably the most important parts of that philosophy. Most of my friends are heterosexual. And they love me for who I am. Now, by knowing me, I am influencing them and they, in turn, influence others. It spreads like wildfire! Years ago, after I told my best friend that I was gay, he stopped other friends of his from making gay-bashing jokes in front of him. When he told me that, I nearly kissed him on both cheeks (he would have killed me had I actually done it!) But seriously, we make life what it is. Coming out is a scary thing. I know, I've done it. Every new friend that I tell, I get the same reaction in my stomach. The knots, the butterflies. God! Does it ever go away? No, not really. Do what you feel comfortable with. If that means telling a friend, or a sister, or your parents (or not) — Great! No effort is too small. And if you can't do that because of whatever situation you find yourself in, don't hate yourself. The only person you have to judge yourself by is the reflection you see in the mirror. Nobody else's opinion really matters when it comes down to it. Trust me. Trust yourself.

I am hoping that people do not get discouraged with the lack of support in Southern Alberta. By starting GLABSA, I am living proof that gays do live down in the Bible Belt and that, if you put your mind to it, anything is possible. In the future, I hope GLABSA will participate in focus groups, provincial conferences, and speaker's panels. Wish us luck. It all comes down to your support. Trust in yourself, believe in yourself.

Take the very best of care and come join us! Everyone is welcome. Check the listing in *Perceptions* for information on how to contact us. I look forward to seeing a lot of new faces and getting to know a lot of new friends. Be brave. It won't be as bad as you think it will be. I guarantee it!

A Personal Look at the Importance of Community Development in Rural Areas

Many people know how it feels to be isolated, cut off and alone. For most lesbians and gay men, this sense of being "the only one" or "different" has played, and often continues to play, a significant and detrimental role in our development as human beings.

In my personal struggle to develop a whole self, including my sexual identity, I have often felt isolated. I was born and raised in a small farming community in Southern Saskatchewan where being a lesbian wasn't even an option—I didn't know what a homosexual was or that the concept of same-sex romantic love existed. Largely because of geographical and social limitations, I grew up isolated from people I could identify with. Things didn't improve when I moved to Saskatoon to go to University and then on to Calgary to go to College because during that time I was involved in a fundamentalist Christian Church. My whole experience in the Fundamentalist world was even more isolating—new ideas and different perspectives were actively discouraged and everything you did was a part of the church community. Although I did get out of *that* community, I continued to spend the next years in isolation. Those years, spent in Medicine Hat and then Lethbridge, were especially difficult ones because, without *any* sort of community and a desperate need to connect with someone, I found myself caught up in a highly dysfunctional, codependent relationship with a woman. It was a long hard process but, finally, I began to break out of this hell when I found a feminist community consisting of a small but dedicated group of women. It was there that I found people who were open and caring, aware of all sorts of issues, had strong convictions and values, and saw the world much the same way I did. By embracing feminism, I began to overcome the feelings of isolation. I found a safe place to deal with issues of who I was and who I loved and it was also the first step in my coming out process. Now, several years and much healing later, I am a self-proclaimed, out and proud, lesbian feminist.

As I look back at the role that "community" (or lack thereof) has played in my life, I can see how significant it was. Whether it was the desperation I felt when I was locked in a

community where I couldn't be who I really was, or the fear that accompanied not being a part of a community at all, or, finally, the sense of empowerment that I found when I entered a community in which I was accepted—in every instance I cannot underestimate the role of "community".

Now, I have the opportunity to play a formal role in attempting to eliminate isolation for the bisexuals, gay men and lesbians living in Lethbridge, Alberta and area by attempting to develop a health community. The Lethbridge AIDS Connection (LAC) has initiated a Gay Community Development Project and has hired me to get it off the ground. As the Project Coordinator I take my direction from a steering committee of volunteers from the "queer community" and together we will work to bring together the efforts of individuals and groups already doing work in the "community". As a Working Group we will also endeavour to do outreach work, identify new needs and then come up with the strategies and activities necessary to meet these additional needs.

LAC's motivation for initiating this project is the belief that a *strong and active* community—in all its diversity: gay men, lesbians and bisexuals of all sizes, shapes, colours, ages, classes, etc.—will serve as a foundation of support and acceptance for each other *including* those individuals who are living with HIV/AIDS and it will enable men who have sex with men to maintain safer sex behaviour.

We are just in the initial planning stages of this development project which has a 3-year time line, if funding continues that long. But one way or another, I'm convinced that this "community" must continue to grow, because I believe the development of strong, healthy, supportive communities for gay men, lesbians and bisexuals are absolutely essential to our survival and well-being in this homophobic and heterosexist city, region, province and world.

The number of challenges that exist here, in this hotbed of right wing conservative values, is sometimes daunting, but one of the best ways to overcome these obstacles is to

build a strong community from the inside out. This won't be easy either, for while we as lesbians, bisexuals and gay men have a lot in common, we also have many differences. Ours is a very small sub-community, but it's not too small for differences. It is, however, too small for divisions. When I think of "our community", I obviously think of one that includes both women and men. I also see it made up of people of varying ages, classes, religions, races and creeds. I'd like it to recognize that bisexuals have different experiences and issues than gay men and lesbians. And I hope it is a community that has a place for our straight allies. In short, I see our community as very diverse and I think it is our willingness to accept this diversity, and not let it divide us, that will provide the strength we need to stand proud in the outside world.

No doubt our community will reflect the fact that we are all human beings with a variety of human qualities, strengths and weaknesses. As such we are bound to have some personal differences: different values, interests, politics, perspectives, dreams, experiences, etc. Still, let's hope we don't exclude anyone just because of these differences. Instead, we can all help to develop a variety of activities and events that serve many different purposes and meet individual needs. We know how important it is to be an accepted part of a community. We must never forget how painful it is to be ignored or rejected by our community. So let's strive to make our communities open and accepting of diversity.

Yes, this is a tall order and perhaps it all sounds a little too idealistic, but I believe there are enough of us who, having experienced isolation and rejection, are motivated to create and maintain support systems. Together, we all have some strong reasons for wanting to develop a community, so together let's do it.

If you want further information on the Gay Community Development Project in Lethbridge, Alberta, or would like to offer suggestions or assistance, please contact Terry Harrison at (403)328-8186.

OUT IN SASKATCHEWAN

(Saskatoon) Efforts are underway to organize lesbians and gay men in Saskatchewan who are not part of organized communities in Saskatoon and Regina. Gay & Lesbian Health Services, based in Saskatoon, has begun their rural outreach project which they are calling "Out In Saskatchewan".

The project, which is funded for three years by the AIDS Community Action Program (ACAP) of Health & Welfare Canada, officially started last winter but energy so far has been put into developing evaluation tools and planning ways to conduct the outreach. "This project is being viewed as a pilot project in Canada by ACAP," said GLHS coordinator Sheri McConnell. "So we have spent the past few months developing the tools to monitor and evaluate what we do," McConnell added.

The project has two main goals: to help network lesbians and gay men in areas of the province outside Saskatoon and Regina and assist them in developing support and social systems, and to educate helping professionals and agencies so they are better informed and equipped to support the gay and lesbian community in their area. The project is funded by ACAP because they believe, along with GLHS, that AIDS education and support can not effectively occur without some organized lesbian and gay community.

"The myth still persists that gays and lesbians are an urban phenomena," said GLHS executive director Gens Hellquist. "There are many lesbians and gay men living in smaller cities and towns in the province as well as on farms and ranches. They deserve the right to have support systems that allow them to live healthier and more satisfying lives as gay men and lesbians," he added. "Not all gays and lesbians want to live in larger urban centres and they shouldn't have to live without places where it is safe to be who they are," Hellquist said.

GLHS has picked four communities that they plan to begin working in. Prince Albert, which has a history of having a gay and lesbian group, is the first one that they have begun work in. A meeting is scheduled for Oct 6 at 7:30 to discuss with interested gays and lesbians the formation of a group in PA. The meeting is being held at Brightsand Therapies, 349 - 16th St West. A one-day training work-

"The myth still persists that gays and lesbians are an urban phenomenon."

shop for professionals has also been scheduled for Nov 4 in the city.

Discussion have been initiated with a small group in the Maidstone/Lashburn/Waseca area west of Saskatoon. The group Support and Self-Education Group for Gay and Lesbian People, their Families & Friends has been meeting for over a year now with a focus on AIDS education. Initial discussion with the group indicate they are wanting to deal more with lesbian and gay issues. GLHS hopes to meet with that group in October to look at ways they can support one another.

The other communities that have been selected by GLHS to work in are Yorkton and Maple Creek. A few gay men in the Maple Creek area have expressed interest in organizing some type of support group for gays and lesbians and GLHS has had some initial discussions about ways they can assist in the formation of a group in that area. At this point GLHS has no established contacts in Yorkton and they

intend to begin working there by conducting a training workshop for professionals.

"We have selected four communities with very different situations," said McConnell. "This will allow us to discover what works and what doesn't work in organizing different types of communities," she added. "Hopefully we will be able to develop some value resource materials on helping gays and lesbians in different types of communities organize which can be used in other parts of the country."

GLHS hopes to establish a 1-800 toll-free line in the near future. "We believe an anonymous telephone support and information line is needed for gays and lesbians everywhere, including outside the bigger cities," said Hellquist. "It is probably not feasible to have a number of lines spread out in numerous communities but with the current line in Saskatoon we believe we can provide support and information to people from outside Saskatoon," he added. "The only thing holding us up is finding donations or grants for the \$5,000 a year we expect the line to cost," Hellquist said.

GLHS expects they will run into homophobic opposition in their outreach to rural areas but believe it is important to confront homophobia wherever it occurs. The project is expected to begin the process of easing the isolation many lesbians and gays who live outside large urban areas often feel and helping them connect with the larger community in Saskatoon. GLHS also plans to connect the different groups they help develop with one another so they can share experiences and provide support to one another.

Information on the Out In Saskatchewan project can be obtained by writing GLHS, Box 8581, Saskatoon, SK S7K 6K7 or calling 1-306-665-1224. Donations to support the project can also be sent to the above address.

PRIDE IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA

(Medicine Hat) The newest lesbian and gay organization on the prairies has begun in Medicine Hat. The first meeting was held February 3 and the group already has approximately 25 people involved with it. The new group, which calls itself Prairie Pride, is currently meeting the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month.

Group organizer Donny White said he has felt the need for some time for a mechanism for gays and lesbians in Medicine Hat to come together in the southern Alberta city. White said there are a number of lesbians and gay men in the city but there has never before been a group in the city for gays and lesbians. Previously, gay people travelled to Calgary to meet other people and obtain support for being lesbian or gay.

Last fall, White wrote an article for the local paper refuting claims about gays and lesbians made by local Reform MP Monte Solberg at a townhall meeting. In the article he broached the idea of organizing a group for gays and lesbians in Medicine Hat. White said it was the first time anyone had ever come out publicly in the city of 45,000 people. White received nearly 50 calls as a result of the article and said all of them were positive and supportive. White added that he was surprised by the extremely positive response he got to the article. Many callers congratulated him on the article and said they were pleased to see something positive about the gay and lesbian community. Many echoed the sentiment that they were sick and tired of constantly hearing red-neck sentiment expressed about gays and lesbians.

The second call he received was from local police chief Bill Spring who said he wanted his department to participate in support efforts for the local lesbian and gay community. He has since appointed two officers to work as direct liaisons with the lesbian and gay community. People with concerns about being bashed or other police-related problems can now go directly to those two police officers. The police also spoke at a meeting of the new group and offered suggestions on

how to deal with harassment and how to make reports to the police when they have been victims of violence. Spring told White that he believes that lesbians and gay men deserve the same access to services as other citizens.

White said the main purpose of the group at this time is to provide support for lesbians and gay men in the area. He added that they may end up becoming an umbrella organization for other activities in the community. One group member has begun a social committee and White hopes to form a political action committee in the near future.

The group is attracting people from a wide area of southeast Alberta and southwest Saskatchewan. Members come to meetings from as far away as Brooks, Alberta, an hour's drive and the Maple Creek, Sas-

katchewan area, also an hour's drive away.

White said he has really experienced a feeling of liberation since starting the group and coming out publicly. "I feel like the emperor with new clothes. It is the most liberating experience I've every experienced," he said. White, who works for the City of Medicine Hat, has received support from all quarters. The mayor has told him to report any problems he has with people so he can take care of them himself.

White has also circulated a petition calling on Ottawa to amend the Canadian Bill of Rights to include sexual orientation and was able to collect over 150 signatures in a short period of time. He has sent the petition to Solberg, who said he would present it to the House of Commons but White is still waiting for it to be presented.

For the past three years I've had the pleasure of working on a project that has as its purpose connecting lesbians and gay men who live outside the two major urban centres in Saskatoon. We knew there were numerous gay men, lesbians and bisexuals who lived and worked in the smaller cities of the province, in the towns, on the farms and ranches, on the reserves and in the northern bush. We also recognized that isolation is a major health issue in our larger community as that isolation frequently leads people to suicide, substance abuse or mental illness.

Our project was funded by the AIDS Community Action Plan, which is the federal government body that funds AIDS organizations across Canada. They agreed with our premise that people who are isolated around their sexual orientation were more likely to devalue their life and not protect themselves from contracting the virus that leads to AIDS. For some of us the project was important because we personally know people who grew up in small town Saskatchewan or on the farm and their journey to self acceptance was unnecessarily painful.

I've always been frustrated at how lesbian and gay communities in the larger urban centres have myopic vision of community and safety that extends no further than their city limits. In many places, especially the larger ones like Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal, that boundary often gets drawn at the margins of the identified ghetto. I've always found this odd especially in light of the fact that most of the denizens of that ghetto or community are refugees from rural parts of the country. Perhaps the isolation they felt while growing up is still so painful that considering the possibility that there might still be gay people out there is not possible.

Working on the Out in Saskatchewan project has confirmed for me that there indeed are many gay people in smaller cities and rural areas who want to live where they do because that is who they are and what they feel. There is a slowly growing vibrant gay, lesbian and bisexual community developing in small towns and rural areas of the country.

In the last few years we have seen gay and lesbian communities develop in smaller cities like Prince Albert, Medicine Hat, Moose Jaw and Grande Prairie. These communities operate rather differently than those in the big city, partly out of necessity, partly out of fear and I suspect partly out of habit. These communities are accessed by people who live in small towns and on ranches and farms meaning the two to four hour trek to the big city for community becomes something one does as a treat instead of as a life saving necessity.

Last evening I had the pleasure of listening to Michael Riordon read some selections from his new book *Out Our Way: gay and lesbian life in the country*. Michael introduced us to some fascinating and brave people who were living in the country and surviving as lesbians and gay men. Some, like himself and his partner Brian, were big city folk who had tired of the city rat race and escaped to the country. Some were country born who had returned only after finding themselves in a larger centre. Some had always lived in the country because they loved the life.

After Michael finished his reading we spent two hours talking over diet coke, hot chocolate and cheese toast. I was interested in hearing more of his


stories about people's life in the country. Michael met more than three hundred people in his 27,000 kilometre journey across Canada. He returned with stories about the lives of rural lesbians and gay men and how a vibrant community is beginning to develop in small city, small town and rural Canada. I met some of those brave pioneers through Michael's reading, a few more during our conversation and I hope to meet more of them when I have the opportunity to read his book.

The people Michael met had a vast array of lifestyles. Some were totally hidden in their communities and their identity in the book is camouflaged by a pseudonym. Others had established an identity as gay or lesbian although that identity developed over a length of time not by marching down main street in a pride parade. Some couldn't wait for the opportunity to escape their private hell to the queer community in the big city. Michael found a vast diversity in the people he met during his trek with no pattern in how community was structured from place to place. He met a group of people who had travelled very different paths to reach the place where they could feel good about their gay identity while still living a rural lifestyle.

We discussed the role of developed urban gay communities and what their responsibility is to gays and lesbians who reside in rural areas. Over the past few years some of those larger communities have developed phone lines that are accessed by rural people. Frequently the attitude behind those phone lines is to help those callers until they can escape to the big city. I agreed with Michael when he said that the new job of the gay and lesbian movement is to make it possible for gay people to live where they want to live. We must realize that people may actually want to live in their rural community. The solution isn't always for people to move.

Some people are drawn to the landscape or they love farming or ranching. Some have taken over the family business because that is what gives them a charge in life. And some are even big city gays and lesbians who have moved to the country to escape the urban frenzy. I understand those reasons and it is one of the reasons I've remained in Saskatoon. While I don't live in the country I can easily escape there by jumping in my car and driving for ten minutes. I would miss that in a place like Toronto. Others in the larger cities understand it as well and like Michael are migrating to the country.

It's time we indeed move into a new phase of gay liberation—that of assisting our brothers and sisters who live outside our urban communities. Assisting in the development of support systems that meet their needs, not what we perceive their needs should be. Assisting them in connecting with one another, as isolation is still a problem especially for young lesbians and gay men struggling to find their own identity. We can also provide a visible voice because we don't have to live in that community.

I'm always struck by how many of the debates about our lives conducted by our elected representatives are shaped by legislators who represent rural areas. They usually see the issue as a big city issue because those gay people who reside in their riding are not able to be visible. If we truly want the laws of this country to be changed to provide us with full access to the benefits of citizenship we have to expand our vision of community beyond the boundaries of our own ghetto. Until we all feel safe none of us have true safety. Supporting our rural communities will strengthen us all. 

Twenty-one years ago, in a small Manitoba city, I came out of the closet. To suggest for a moment that I was some sort of militant homosexual activist would be wrong. In fact, my coming out was more like an experience orchestrated by Jerry Lewis. Bumbling, innocent, and naive, coming out for me was a case of saying too much, to the wrong people, at the wrong time. So, unknowingly, and with almost instant regret, I was an out homosexual before I had even graduated Grade Five. At that point, coming out for me was only an exercise in learning about the fear and hatred of homosexuals. I now knew what the words *faggot*, *fairy* and *queer* meant, and they were all directed at me. I suddenly found out what it felt like to be stalked by those in school who had a penchant for beating up kids who were different. Through those experiences, I also learned the indifference my suffering would have, as teachers and principals ignored the verbal abuse and physical assaults they were often witness to.

Only a year later, I stumbled upon a magazine at my corner store by the name of *Mandate*. A seemingly innocent magazine that stared out at me with a picture of Burt Reynolds on the cover. Expecting the thrill of a men's fashion magazine (perhaps even swimsuit photos!) I opened up the magazine and entered the next phase of my homosexual existence. After I regained consciousness, it occurred to me that I probably didn't want people to see me reading this magazine so I hurriedly made it home.

Where I lived, being a fag at eleven was pretty pointless. No one else I knew was gay. In fact, I was convinced I was likely one of only a handful in North America. There were no gay role models (outside of Liberace) and there was certainly no one else to talk to about my feelings or fears. Now, at the age of twelve and my discovery of what many refer to as "porn" I entered a new realm, one created by gay men for other gay men. Through these magazines I learned that I was not alone. I also learned that all happy gay men lived in San Francisco and New York and that all gay men had beautiful bodies with appendages that could take your eye out (I was twelve, alright!).

Over the next few years, these magazines brought me through many difficult times. I gained an education about how my life could be and how the lives of other gay men were. I read other men's experiences about coming out and I became political without really trying (and yes, I saw a lot of naked guys...) By the age of seventeen, though, there was still one thing missing; I still hadn't met someone who was gay. Resolving to end my isolation was only the first step. Finding a way to actually achieve it was another.

By the age of eighteen I found myself living in Saskatoon where I came upon an ad in the classified section of the paper advertising "Gaylines." So here I was, one phone call away from entering another

phase of my life as a friend of Dorothy's, and yet the fear of making that step was almost overwhelming. At this point in my life I had no skill in developing new relationships, I had never dated, and I had never picked up a phone and talked to a live homosexual. And, in spite of my education over the previous years, I still feared those ingrained stereotypes taught me by others; that all homosexuals are simply sexual predators.

What I did not understand or appreciate at that time was the important role community organizations would play in my life. Throughout my life no one had ever considered my issues as important or even existent. My schools, doctors, parents and my society failed to provide me with support as a gay man. Yet I did finally find solace in a community group that had been established with my very needs in mind. Gaylines offered me an opportunity to come into a community and receive the information and support I needed. Gaylines evolved into Gay and Lesbian Health Services as we know it today, and beyond its tremendous

growth the only other change has been in the name. And now, when needs continue to rise, GLHS faces imminent closure without an infusion of financial help.

As someone who now works in the community-based movement I also know first hand the benefits we provide when a dominant culture refuses to accept and deal with an issue. Whether it's homosexuality or AIDS, community groups fulfil a need that is paramount to the health and well being of our entire community. The benefits can be as tangible as preventing a suicide and as intangible as improving the overall quality of someone's life. In Saskatchewan, many community groups are facing extinction, whether they address gay issues or AIDS issues. Simply put, the government of this province refuses to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that is made daily.

When one understands the savings to the province that have been generated through the volunteer and donor-based work that groups have done, it becomes clear that the government has, for many years now, had a free ride. Our expectations for financial support make undeniable fiscal sense. With the passage of protection from discrimination for homosexuals in Saskatchewan, the NDP gave a sigh of relief. They had suddenly righted all wrongs and changed the world for all of Saskatchewan's gays and lesbians. It is time we all asked, "What have you done for us lately?" The party espouses views that would certainly encourage our support, but where's the backbone beyond such platitudes? Personally and professionally, I understand the important role community groups play in our society; and the government will tell you that they understand as well. But to support our community? That's another issue entirely. We simply don't matter to the NDP. ▮

*Where I lived, being
a fag at eleven was
pretty pointless.*

The author of this article lives in a small community west of Saskatoon. Recently that community has gone through turmoil over the introduction of a lesbian United Church minister into the community. The following is the author's personal insight to the experience.

We've won! I heard this a couple of times in one week and it got me wondering... Have we?

There is an old Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times." Well, it has been interesting here, to say the least. While Ellen has been going through her angst in TV Land, here in reality we've had our own coming out issue.

First off, when I found out our new United Church minister was gay, I introduced myself to her. I know what it is like to be gay and live in a rural community without a gay support network, formal or not. In turn, she introduced me to her partner (a big, beautiful gal) and we became friends.

It didn't take long for rumours of her orientation to start, but since gossip is as common as mosquitoes, sensible people mind their own business. Not everyone is sensible, though. When she was asked to continue ministering here for a second year, rather than lie she came out to the board and explained about herself and her partner. (Totally unfair! A straight minister never would have to.) After a discussion the board decided to have her continue as their minister for a second year. They said "not one voted against her." Looking back at that statement, I wonder how many voted *for* her?

Within the week some people had their coal-oil on fire over having a gay minister. I never heard the term "lynch" but... I felt bad when I was the one who let the "girls" (as I call them) know that the congregation had some concerns and weren't happy. I also told them I thought they should double-check what's what. Not ten minutes later the chair of the board phoned and said they had to have a congregational meeting about her future as their minister in about two weeks.

This gave me some time to work. I got hold of one of her staunchest supporters to let her know what was going on, and we started to talk to people. A gentle push here and there can do wonders, if you know where and how to push. The line I used most was, "What's changed? She's still the same person you raved about when she first got here."

The meeting finally came. Passions were still running high for some, but most had a chance to think and realize what a find they had in their

minister. A few more, when they opened their mouths, realized how stupid they sounded. The best line at the meeting was also one of the first. It came from a stern ninety-year-old gent who said, "I've found when things are troubled and rough, just wait a bit. Things are never as bad as they seem. Don't let this divide us." With that, he put on his hat, grabbed his cane, and left.

Another common comment was, "She preaches a good sermon."

After everyone had a chance to speak, they voted and a majority were willing to let her continue to be their minister. I really do love "my people" here. Their common sense is stronger than their red necks. This is when I heard the line, "We've won!" I don't like to think of the world as *we* and *they*; shouldn't it be *us*?

During the time I've lived here (most of my life) I've had some rather tense discussions about homosexuality. My favourite was recently when a good friend was using *Leviticus* to condemn homosexuality. After letting him go on for a while, I asked him what he had for supper (I knew it was pork chops). I've always defended gay and lesbian people and have been surprised that no one ever questioned my orientation. There have been some hurtful things said about homosexuals over the years, but especially during the last month or so.

Since then, I've had a lot of interesting conversations, usually with someone coming from a totally different point of view than I thought they would. I worked on the principle, "Never argue with an idiot; someone watching won't be able to tell the difference." Somebody honestly struggling, I have no problem with. At least they haven't closed their mind.

The biggest and most powerful feeling has been isolation.

How has all this made me feel?

I would have felt more comfortable if I had a closer network of gay people to call on for help. I know I am not the only gay person here, but we are hiding in our self-made closets (me too), scared to even come out to ourselves.


I've also felt afraid. I'm not one to run too far from my fear, so for the most part fear has been an ally and kept me from talking without thinking first. Selfishly, I was afraid about how our minister's coming out would affect me.

The biggest and most powerful feeling has been isolation. We need to build a strong and vital rural gay presence. Gay youth need positive local role models. Out here we are used to talking to people we've known for generations and long problems don't need long histories as to why you are where you are. This I really missed. I'm thankful for GLHS's 1-800 number because there were times when I needed to unload even if I didn't know it. (Hint: Don't talk to Gens when you are even a little upset. He'll get you talking about it even if you didn't think you wanted to.) I'm grateful to all the other phone volunteers for being there when needed.

The other feeling I dealt with was anger. Anger at the city gays for thinking there are no rural gays. Anger at the rural gays who think there are no rural gays, and therefore hide instead of helping someone. And by helping you are helped way more than it costs you. Anger at the fundamentalists who do and say the most un-Christian things in the name of God.

I also felt glad. Glad that there were some folks in the community to hear and let our minister know what was going on. Glad I know who said what, and where they were coming from. Glad that I was there to help gently nudge some people on to a different mental track. As Archbishop Spong said, "People don't think their way to a new way of acting, but act their way to a new way of thinking."

Anyway, the old gent was right. The dust is settling, their minister hasn't sprouted horns or a forked tail, the church hasn't fallen down (though TV reception would improve), and she still preaches a good sermon.

I guess it is never easy for pioneers, but it should be easier for the next person to come out. I hope. 

INCREASED VISIBILITY

(Moose Jaw) After years of trying to become established in this small prairie city it appears that AIDS Moose Jaw is becoming more active and more visible. During this year's AIDS Awareness Week (AAW), September 29 to October 5, the group undertook a number of activities which were firsts for the organization and for the community.

While only 13 walkers showed up to participate in AIDS Walk Moose Jaw they were able to raise over \$1,100 for the organization. AIDS Moose Jaw office manager Danielle Sharp said she was a bit disappointed by the low turn-out for the walk but was excited that the group was finally able to stage their first walk. She added that the stigma associated with HIV and AIDS probably kept many people away from the walk.

The group also staffed a display table in the Town 'N' Country Mall during AIDS Awareness Week. Volunteers handed out information on the organization and HIV/AIDS as well as showing the AIDS video *Time Out*. Sharp said she was pleased with the response to the display, especially from teens and seniors. However she expressed disappointment with the lack of response from people in the 25 to 45 year age range. "We're (25 to 45 year-olds) supposed to be the generation that's more aware, but that doesn't seem to be the case in Moose Jaw," she said.

Sharp was also busy speaking about AIDS at area high schools and at 15 Wing Moose Jaw during AAW. The group also held a community forum at the public library where parents who have lost children to AIDS, people living with AIDS and AIDS workers spoke about the growing epidemic.

Much of the increased activity and visibility for AIDS Moose Jaw stems from the hiring of a full-time staff person, Sharp. Sharp was hired July 1 on a New Careers grant which is slated to expire on December 31 although the group is optimistic that the grant will be extended. Sharp said having someone in the office on a full-time basis has allowed the group to recruit more volunteers and maintain a higher visibility.

AIDS Moose Jaw's mandate is to provide

education about HIV/AIDS as well as providing support to families and individuals affected by HIV/AIDS. They also have a lending library that can be accessed by people wanting more information on the AIDS epidemic. "We're here and we do have resources to provide support, education and prevention," Sharp said.

Sharp added that Moose Jaw is still a difficult city to do AIDS work in. "Many people who are HIV positive will travel to Regina because it's more anonymous," Sharp said. "Attitudes are slowly changing," she added, "but we still have a ways to go."

NORTHERN PRIDE

(Thompson, MB) Gay and lesbian pride has come to this northern Manitoba community with the formation of a queer support group, Just Be! While the group is small in numbers they are ambitious in their plans to bring gay and lesbian issues out of the closet in Thompson.

The group currently has only five or six members but they are encouraging anyone who is interested in learning about or supporting lesbian and gay issues to get involved. "Education is a fundamental component of awareness," said Michael Moreau, one of the organizers of the group. "The more information people have, the better," he added.

Angela Dyck, the group facilitator, said the gay issue has been in the closet for too long in Thompson and indicated she, along with Moreau, is committed to ensuring the group remains alive. "Just Be! will always be there to provide positive support, even if it's just the two of us," she said. "Come hell or high water, we're just gonna meet."

The group has already established a visible presence in the community. They set up a display in a local mall where they were interviewed by the local television station. "People were coming up to us and saying, 'Good for you!'," Dyck said. "Only one person showed up at the mall display with a Bible, arguing for 'Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve'," she added.

The group hasn't always been successful in their ventures. Thompson mayor Bill Tomanski refused to declare Gay Pride Day this year, after being asked to by the group. "Tomanski says he believes sexuality to be a matter of private choice and doesn't want to support a lifestyle he neither understands nor condones," said Moreau. "I come from a liberal and understanding environment, where people in high places were attuned to the issues, so this was a wake-up call. Here, we really have to work to change attitudes."

Moreau says he has seen signs that changes are occurring in Thompson. Four students from the local high school came to a meeting of the group because they were concerned about the treatment their lesbian and gay peers get at school. They took pamphlets back to their guidance counsellors.

For information about the group call Angela Dyck at (204) 677-1997.

HATE / DISCRIMINATION / INTOLERANCE / HOMOPHOBIA

Lavender Cowboy	P26 [1986]: 30
Coalition for Equality Forms	P37 (Dec. 1/87): 30-31
Commentary [concerning murder of Dr. Marvin Klepsch]	P38 (Jan. 13/88): 22-23
AIDS Kills Faggots Dead	P45 (Nov. 9/88): 9
Art Controversy	P53 (Nov. 23/89): 18
Hate in Alberta [about <u>Alberta Report</u>]	P57 (May 30/90): 8
Prairie Life [comments of a gay journalist in a small Saskatchewan town]	P67 (Sept. 25/91): [5]
Terror in B.C. [Slocan]	P67 (Sept. 25/91): 17-18
Fighting Back [Winnipeg]	P68 (Nov. 6/91): 10-11
Meeting the Police [Saskatoon]	P73 (June 10/92): 9
Right against Rights	P76 (Oct. 28/92): 9
Discrimination in Saskatchewan	P84 (Oct. 27/93): 12-13
Fired for Being Queer [Kim Shaw]	P85 (Dec. 8/93): 11-12
Bashings on the Rise [Saskatoon]	P92 (Oct. 26/94): 8
Responding to the Violence [Saskatoon]	P93 (Dec. 7/94): 11
Homophobia at College [Red River Community College, Winnipeg]	P95 (March 8/95): 13
No Freedom to Read	P95 (March 8/95): 20
Freedom to Read Restored	P96 (April 26/95): 21
Man Too Man	P97 (June 7/95): 13
Fighting Back	P99 (Sept. 13/95): 13
Firebombs on the Prairies [Lloydminster]	P101 (Dec. 6/95): 12
Man-To-Man Abuse	P102 (Jan. 31/96): 8-9
Heppner's Hot Again	P111 (March 12/97): 5
Men Bashing Men	P113 (June 4/97): 8-9
The Hugh Owens/Saskatoon <u>Star-Phoenix</u> story:	
Protesting Hate Ad	P114 (July 30/97): 9-10
For the Love of God	P131 (Sept. 15/99): 8-9
An Affront to Dignity	P146 (Aug. 1/01): 10

(continued on next page)

A Bit Easier...For Some	
[Medicine Hat homophobia]	P139 (Sept. 13/00): 10
“Wasting” Taxpayers’ Money	P143 (March 14/01): 12
Customs Strikes Again	P143 (March 14/01): 21
The Cost of Homophobia	P147 (Sept. 12/01): 13
Editorial [concerning religious terrorists]	P148 (Oct. 24/01): 3
The Bill Whatcott story:	
At It Again	P150 (Jan. 30/02): 11-12
The Truth about Hatred	P150 (Jan. 30/02): 7, 9
The Face of Hate	P152 (April 24/02): 10
What’s a Homophobe To Do?	P154 (July 31/02): 9
Speaking Out [Red Deer, Alberta]	P156 (Oct. 23/02): 10

Lavender Cowboy

A couple of weeks ago Brenda and I went to Smug's Lounge (formerly Smugglers) for a nightcap. Although the decor has been pleasantly altered, the live entertainment has definately gone downhill!!

We were not really listening to the singer/guitarist closely until we heard him utter the word 'homosexual'. Our curiosity aroused we intently listened to Jimmy McLean sing 'Lavender Cowboy'.

To a cheering crowd of groupies McLean sung a lengthy song about a homosexual cowboy who rode side-saddle through the land strangling the "bad guys" with his pantyhose.

When we questioned the waitress about this so called singer, she replied that he was an offensive jerk. No argument from us!! We asked if there was anyone we could com-

plain to. She promptly sent the lounge manager over to our table. This equally offensive jerk explained that he didn't really listen to the lyrics of the performers that were hired. Brenda suggested that he had better start. He responded by saying to we two 'ladies, that there are just some topics we shouldn't really make fun of these days'.

McLean appears very often in Smugs and has gathered quite a following of men and women who applaud the 'Lavender Cowboy'. We need to organize an evening whereby a very large group of gay men and lesbians fill up Smugs Lounge (no cover charge) and boo McLean out. At the very least, we should phone the manager continuously and complain. Lavender Cowboys is very offensive and we must exercise our power to force both Smugs and McLean to ensure its demise.

Alana

COALITION FOR EQUALITY FORMS

A new coalition of groups and individuals has been formed in Saskatchewan to address the issue of equal rights for lesbians and gay men. The Coalition for Human Equality (CHE) came into existence as a vehicle to respond to recent homophobic statements by Human Resources Minister Grant Schmidt. At the first meeting, November 1, participants felt that the time to respond to attacks on gays and other minorities by the current provincial government had come. Schmidt's comments about homosexuals were not the first anti-gay comments to be made by cabinet ministers this year and the government, especially Schmidt, have been making discriminatory remarks about other groups such as natives, unemployed, the poor, foreigners and immigrants for some time now. Schmidt's comments about homosexuality galvanized people into action.

The first activity to respond to Schmidt and the government was a news conference on November 2 to announce the Coalition and to call for the removal of Grant Schmidt from his cabinet post. The Coalition also called for changes to Saskatchewan human rights legislation to provide protection against discrimination for lesbians and gays. CHE spokesperson, Peter Millard, said at the news conference that "Asking Grant Schmidt to be Minister of Social Services is like asking Idi Amin to be head of Amnesty International." Erin Shoemaker, another CHE spokesperson, expressed her concern as a Christian that Mr. Schmidt should think that he can determine who is a Christian and who isn't.

At a meeting of CHE activists on November 11 a plan of short term action was mapped out. Representatives from Regina's gay and lesbian

community attended the meeting to facilitate co-ordination of the gay rights campaign on a province wide basis. The first news conference had produced phone calls from a number of groups and individuals supportive of CHE and willing to speak out against the government. A second news conference was planned to air viewpoints from people and organizations outside the gay community.

Simultaneous news conferences were held in Regina and Saskatoon November 24. At the Saskatoon conference the panel was composed of Peter Millard from CHE, psychologist Dr. Myles Genest, Ed Holgate from the Saskatchewan Association on Human Rights, Gail Stevens from Action Child Care, Rev. Frederick Sellers from the United Church and poet Patrick Lane. The panel at the Regina news conference included Kerry Barrett from Regina Gay Community, Ron Kruzeniski, Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission as well as representatives from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women and the Regina Civil Liberties Association.

Mr. Kruzeniski pointed out in his statement that the Commission has been recommending that sexual orientation be included in human rights legislation for many years. He also stated, "the fundamental principle behind human rights legislation is that certain basic rights in employment, education and housing, among others, ought to be possessed by all human beings....No one should have to face discrimination in employment, housing and public service. But, in Saskatchewan, homosexuals do have to accept discrimination

because they are not protected by the law." Mr. Kruzeniski also drew attention to a 1985 Gallop Poll that showed 70% of the Canadian public believes it should be illegal to discriminate against gay people.

Patrick Lane spoke of his concern that Saskatchewan is in danger of going the way of Chile where human rights have been brutally suppressed by a rightwing dictatorship. He encouraged people to speak out against "this kind of incipient oppression" because "silence allows such men (Devine and Schmidt) to do and say whatever they wish.....We must speak out against silence because it is our silence in the face of such oppression that will allow it to succeed."

The United Church speaker, Rev. Seller, pointed out that people who use Christianity as a justification for discriminating against gays are not representative of all Christians. The United Church values gays, he stated, and have passed resolutions calling for the inclusion of sexual orientation in human rights legislation.

Gail Stevens from Action Child Care discussed her concerns about homophobia and how it becomes a cultural norm to denigrate gay people. She spoke, as a parent, about her concern that homophobia divides her daughters from her other female friends and denies people the opportunity to be human.

In his statements Peter Millard gave notice that CHE has been organized to break the silence about discriminatory remarks made by members of the provincial government and that CHE intends to speak out. He voiced his concern that Saskatchewan is gaining a reputation as a cruel, red-neck province and is in danger of losing its tradition as a caring, humane province. All speakers at the two news conferences called on the government to

change legislation to guarantee gays and lesbians equality.

At a CHE meeting November 25 discussion was held on formalizing the goals of the organization. The first weeks of the group were spent reacting to issues and identifying the need to develop clear goals with a clear plan for the organization. That meeting agreed on the first set of goals for CHE. These goals are: lobbying the provincial government to bring Saskatchewan human rights legislation in line with the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms; lobbying the provincial government to include sexual discrimination as a prohibited grounds of discrimination; and educating the general public on human rights issues. Three main areas of work that need to be done were identified as organizational development, education and lobbying.

The Coalition has undertaken a major project and will need support from many people, gay and non-gay. Already a large number of non-gay people, lesbians and gay men have come forward with offers of support and assistance. CHE's success will no doubt be determined by the number of people who are no longer content to be silent and are willing to work for change.

Gens Hellquist

COMMENTARY —

a personal viewpoint

I feel obligated to the friends and acquaintances of the late Marvin Klepsch to inform them of what I see as gross discrepancies in the Star Phoenix. I think much of what the Star Phoenix reported was more hearsay or information that was, at best, fifth hand. I think it might be best if I explain what I believe happened that night and let the reader's draw their own conclusions.

I had been drinking with Marv on the night of August 24, 1985. We had been drinking with friends at the Senator and at midnight we moved over to the Albany. At 2:00 am we left the Albany and went to the donut shop on 3rd and 22nd Street. I left Marv there and went cruising on foot. We had painted his entire condo the week previously and he had put everything back into place on that Friday in expectations of his girlfriend's visit. He had plans for the morning so did not expect to be up too much longer and stated he would probably head right home.

Marvin left the donut shop a little before 3:00 am. On his way home he picked up a hitchhiker and they ended up at his house for a beer. What transpired between the two of them is anyone's guess. There was positive evidence that someone had sex in the master bedroom and that one or both of them had a shower, more than likely the hitchhiker as it was left in a state of disarray. There were no signs of violence in the house at all.

At the preliminary hearing it was set out that a fight occurred in the field where Marvin's body was found and that Marv had escaped. The hitchhiker chased him in the car with the end result being Marv was run down and sustained the injuries to his ribs and lung. He was then bound with his hands and feet behind him and left to die. The hitchhiker left the scene with Marv's car and went to see friends, ultimately bragging that he had a fight with a fag. The car was eventually left in a parking lot in Sutherland and the battery was removed. Marv was left to die in the field slowly bleeding to death over a period of 10 to 12 hours.

I have been involved in the R.C.M.P. investigation from the beginning—at first a prime suspect and later as a sounding board for various theories and innuendos. The major portion of the investigation seemed to focus on who was gay in Saskatoon and what job they held more so than who murdered Dr. Klepsch. I know first hand about threats to one's job and lifestyle if the police did not get the answers they expected. Unfortunately, they were out of their league or field of expertise dealing with the gay community. I think it is a very sad commentary on the investigation by the R.C.M.P. that it took two years to get a conviction with the same evidence they gathered in the first four months of the investigation.

The Star Phoenix portrayed Dr. Klepsch as the guilty party and not the victim left to bleed to death in a field, bound and beaten. I think the fabrication of a story that fit all the evidence released to the public is a

credit to someone's imagination. It fit all the beliefs and innuendos portrayed over the last two years in newspapers and news reports that a faggot had molested a drunk young man and received a beating for his troubles. Unfortunately, I don't believe this is true but, in the plea bargaining shuffle, it appears the truth was trade for a fabricated story resulting in a nine year sentence.

I hope I have added something and corrected the image of Marvin Klepsch that was left by the reports in the Star Phoenix. He was an upstanding member of his profession and most certainly a kind and understanding man whose compassion and integrity will be remembered by his many friends.

L.M.

AIDS KILLS FAGGOTS DEAD

Hate messages directed at people living with AIDS and gay people have been showing up in Saskatoon. Recently, Lynn Harvey, a board member of AIDS Saskatoon, was in the Confederation Park Plaza when she came across a newly-opened kiosk openly displaying caps with the message AIDS KILLS FAGGOTS DEAD printed across them. Harvey approached the clerk in the kiosk and expressed her outrage at the message on the caps. The clerk, who seemed to think the message was cute, didn't see any problem with the caps and their message.

Harvey then approached the manager of the mall to convey her displeasure about the kiosk and the caps. She informed the manager that the caps were an insult to the work that AIDS Saskatoon has been doing in Saskatoon especially in light of the fact that it was AIDS Awareness Week in Saskatoon. Like the clerk in the kiosk, the mall manager didn't see any problem with the caps but she finally agreed to contact the owner of the kiosk who was situated in Edmonton. A phone campaign was begun with people calling the mall manager to complain about the caps. The manager later commented to one person that she thought that whoever had organized the campaign was irresponsible. She was also visited by a local Anglican minister who wanted to voice his objections to the caps. His discussion ended by the manager stating that she was glad she wasn't a member of the Anglican church and the minister agreeing that he also was glad she wasn't a member.

The caps disappeared from display later that day as it appears that the kiosk owner in Ed-

monton called his clerk and had her take them off display. The company that sells the caps has kiosk in malls across Western Canada. The AIDS Network in Edmonton was also called and informed about the caps and they plan to deal directly with the company.

This is not the first time that the hateful message has appeared in Saskatoon. Last year, a past member of the board of AIDS Saskatoon came across the same message in a T-shirt store in Market Mall. Once again the management was approached and a complaint lodged about the hateful message. The management agreed to withdraw the shirts and to destroy the transfers used to imprint the shirts. Last summer a booth at the Exhibition was also selling T-shirts with the offensive message.

The problem has certainly not been confined to Saskatoon. Reports have been received from various cities across Canada about T-shirts with the same message. One has to wonder what kind of warped mind would actually conceive of printing T-shirts and caps with such a vicious message not to mention what kind of sick person would actually pay good money to sport such a hateful message.

GENS HELLQUIST

ART CONTROVERSY

ART CONTROVERSY

An alternate title for this article might be The Show and the Sideshow. The multi-media exhibition, Dik Campbell's "Pressing", opened as part of Metamorphosis '89 and ran through October at A.K.A. Gallery in Saskatoon. The sideshow came when a pastor from Circle Drive Alliance Church began a letter-writing and television news campaign against both the exhibition and a newspaper ad for it which showed two shirtless men with their arms around each other's backs. Featured in the ad was the message, "Someday, this will be none of your business."

Pastor Kelly Backmans decided that it was his business and wrote to, among others, the gallery, the Saskatchewan Arts Board and the Minister of Parks, Recreation and Culture, charging the show with "promoting the homosexual lifestyle." He declared that "God created two sexes, not three."

Originally from Newfoundland, Campbell is a recent graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and now lives in Saskatoon. He created "Pressing" as a response to the hundreds of newspaper articles concerning gays and lesbians that have appeared since Svend Robinson disclosed his homosexuality in February, 1988. One of the headlines displayed in the show was "Damage to constituency office linked to homosexual declaration". This refers to the fact that Robinson's windows were smashed. Throughout the exhibition, broken glass and rocks appeared as reminders of anti-gay violence.

A mixture of photographs, slide projections, video and sculpture created both written and visual puns. Campbell titled his response to Social Services Minister Grant Schmidt's claim that gay couples are not families, "Bull-Schmidt". The piece consisted of a table covered with photos of Campbell, his male lover and their cat, as well as two sets of shaving equipment.

One of the most painfully effective works in the show also contained a pun. Under a photo of Joe Rose, who was "killed for being gay" by 15 youths on a bus, a line of red rose petals bore the letters V-I-O-L-E-N-C-E B-R-E-E-D-S.

"Pressing" was a thought-provoking and disturbing exhibition. I look forward to seeing more work by Dik Campbell.

Don Campbell
(no relation to the artist)

HATE IN ALBERTA

(Calgary) Gays and lesbians in Alberta are furious about recent outpourings of hate and lies in recent editions of the weekly magazine Alberta Report. The March 19th issue of the right-wing publication included an editorial by Link Byfield entitled "Maybe AIDS Is Just The Gay Plague After All". In his odious editorial, Byfield stated that "the grotesque and promiscuous practises and sexually related diseases to which gays are prone are too shocking for a family magazine like this to recite, and too long for this brief column." In his "brief column" he added, "It is impossible not to pity the wasted and tortured victims of the gay virus...As the truth about AIDS becomes plainer, their leaders only grow angrier and more tracherous -- most recently demanding the rights to adopt and sodomize young children."

With his twisted logic, Byfield suggested that many of the ills of society are brought about by gays and lesbians and their growing social and political strength which he claims is evil. "This is not surprising in a society which 20 or 30 years ago lost its understanding of the reality of right and wrong, virtue and sin. And it is not surprising that sodomites, who best reflect that loss of understanding, are its most pathetic, most unrepentant and most unhappy victims," he adds. After his outpouring of vitriol and lies he says, "Let us not hate them. They are too wretched for that." He goes on to call for the restoration of "all the legal and social prohibitions against unnatural sex we have so liberally pitched out since."

The Calgary Lesbian and Gay Political Action Guild (CLAGPAG), a group formed in 1989 to speak and act on behalf of the political concerns facing Calgary's gay and lesbian community, reacted swiftly to the editorial in the Alberta Report. CLAGPAG laid a complaint with Calgary police, who CLAGPAG spokesperson Jeff Dodds said were "excellent", but they were referred by the police to the crown prosecutor. The crown prosecutor officials examined the case but decided against taking any action. Dodds says crown prosecutor officials were also supportive but he believes that they felt it would be useless to lay charges considering that the conviction against Jim Keegstra for disseminating hate was overturned by a higher court. It appears that the hate laws in Alberta are basically useless and that people are free to spread hate without any fear of legal action against them.

The Alberta Report, which was originally owned by the Anglican Church before being bought out by Link Byfield and his father, Ted, is distributed throughout Western Canada. After getting no satisfaction from the police and crown prosecutor, CLAGPAG mounted a campaign to ask people to cancel subscriptions which has met with some success. Dodds says that six of the last seven issues have had anti-gay articles but they have also contained a few letters to the editor speaking out against the hateful articles and asking that the wirtner's subscription be cancelled. Dodds says they have also been going after advertisers to withdraw their support from Byfield's homophobic publication and he has noticed a drop in advertising, although he cannot be sure



it is related to CLAGPAG's campaign. Some of the major advertisers are Alberta government departments who claim that they do not want to allow themselves to be pressured by "special interest groups", although some have offered to make financial contributions to CLAGPAG.

Dodds says they have received good support from the community and the local media has been sympathetic. Numerous local groups and churches have also supported CLAGPAG's campaign against the Alberta Report. Dodds says CLAGPAG will continue to approach advertisers about cancelling their business with Byfield's magazine as well as getting people to cancel subscriptions. Dodds says the magazine was originally mailed free to many professionals where it was available in their waiting rooms. He suspects that when the magazine began billing them, many paid the bill without really being aware of what the magazine was about.

In the midst of all the furor over Byfield's articles, Elaine McCoy, the minister responsible for the Human Rights Commission and human rights legislation in Alberta, announced that she thought it was quite unlikely that Alberta would see gay rights in the next ten years. Last year McCoy promised to press her government colleagues to pass legislation protecting gays and lesbians against discrimination. It appears that she has not been successful.

Gens Hellquist

PRAIRIE LIFE

Stephen Millar

Gay journalists don't like living in small-town Saskatchewan, and it ain't because of the grasshoppers. It's because we don't care for the intolerance and homophobia we often come into contact with.

Sports reporting is particularly bad. Some of the athletes I cover on an on-going basis are the most narrow-minded, bigoted homophobes I've ever had the misfortune to meet. They seem to believe that gays and lesbians couldn't compete with straights successfully on the playing field.

I'd love to hear them explain Martina Navratilova.

Gay sports reporters must also remember one thing: should one's sexual orientation become public, that journalist can kiss any fu-

ture locker-room interviews good-bye. That means you can kiss your reporting job good-bye. It won't be the blatant "We don't serve your kind here" bigotry, but the more insidious "Sorry - the team van is full - we'll talk to you after we get back into town" prejudice.

At least one of my friends suggested I keep my homosexuality "under wraps" during my stay in Kindersley; he was concerned I might become the proverbial sacrificial lamb should anyone find out. Well, I have no desire to become lamb chops. However, the policy I've adopted is to establish my credibility as a good sports reporter over the next few months and then begin the process of coming out at work. Let the chips fall where they may.

It's crucial for every gay and lesbian to come out - emotional trauma is the only sure result if they don't. Straight people, especially small-town straights, have to be shown homosexuality isn't a thing to be feared and ridiculed. Besides, if I get a hostile reaction, I'm gonna write one humdinger of a final sports column. It'll open a few eyes and maybe do some good for the next gay journalist who finds himself or herself in small-town Saskatchewan.

And you can take that to the bank.

Stephen Millar is a sports reporter who has recently moved to Kindersley, Saskatchewan.

TERROR IN B.C.

(Slocan) Michael Cassidy and his lover have been the subjects of a brutal campaign of terror on their goat farm six miles outside Slocan in the Kootenays. Late on June night Cassidy was home alone when three drunk young men burst in brandishing baseball bats and knives. For the next hour they attacked Cassidy and set about demolishing the house. They assaulted Cassidy, calling him an AIDS-infected faggot and tore the house apart. When the three attackers finally left, Cassidy, suffering from an arm broken in two places, legs beaten black and numerous knife wounds, crawled out of the house to hide in the bushes. When he finally felt safe enough to return to the house he had to repair the phone before he could call the police at 3:00am. The police informed him they couldn't be out until the next day and asked if he wanted an ambulance. Eight hours later the police finally managed to show up at Cassidy's house.

Three weeks later two men attempted another attack but this time Cassidy was not alone. When these attackers entered the house they headed for Cassidy's partner, whom they punched in the nose. Cassidy's partner is a "big boy" so he was able to push them out of the house.

A month later Cassidy was attacked again. By either coincidence or plan Cassidy's partner was in town and Cassidy was alone healing from the first beating in a full arm cast. The two attackers stomped on the cast and kicked Cassidy in the face while shouting "No-good Faggot!" By coincidence a friend from the West Kootenay Gay & Lesbian Society tried to phone and Cassidy was able to kick the phone to the floor so the caller could hear the attack taking place. He

immediately called the police and the attackers became spooked by the call and the thought that there was a gun in the house. They dragged Cassidy to the road and beat him until they thought he was dead. He was found by his partner, nearly dead: covered in blood, bleeding from his mouth and ears with one eye nearly destroyed. The doctor who attended Cassidy said the attack was nearly fatal and Cassidy was hospitalized for ten days.

The police were more prompt in investigating this attack and were aided when one of the guilt-ridden assailants confessed. Two other juveniles were later charged. After the slow response by the police to the first attack, Cassidy attempted to get a detachment from another area to intervene but the request was denied until the second attack. A sergeant from the second RCMP detachment agreed that a reasonable response time should be "pretty nearly immediately". The RCMP are now investigating the response of their officers to the attacks.

In such a small town it did not take long to discover the identity of the attackers. When Cassidy drove up to one of them working as a flagman the youth gave him the finger. After the first attack Cassidy was afraid to report their identities for fear of threatened reprisals. The police also offered no encouragement to press charges. When the attackers were confronted by authorities they didn't deny entering the house but were encouraged by the authorities to deny the beatings. The prosecutor emphasized that it would be Cassidy's word against his attackers and his state of trauma made his testimony doubtful.

Anti-minority violence is not new to the Kootenays. Not far from

Slocan, 25 East Indian tree planters were attacked by baseball bat swinging teens. Most people in the valley are related and unaccustomed to outsiders. Cassidy had been in the area for only three months before the brutal attacks.

The incidents inspired fear and tension for not only Cassidy but also the rest of the gay community. When a reporter from Vancouver's gay paper, *Angles*, interviewed people about the story, no one wanted their names used. The threat did serve to draw the gay community together by providing round-the-clock watches at Cassidy's. Members of the non-gay community also were shocked enough to share in the watches. As a result, the gay community made a number of contacts with sympathetic non-gays who now have a clearer picture of the numbers of gays in their midst. \$150 in donations was also collected by local stores in a few days. Cassidy also received a "welcome to the valley" message signed by 90 residents. Volunteer work parties were organized that not only restored the farmhouse but completed an addition.

The attacks have proven too much, though, for Cassidy and his lover, who feel it is wiser to move away from the town that contains the parents who raised their brutal attackers.

FIGHTING BACK

(Winnipeg) Gay men and lesbians in Winnipeg have joined to fight the homophobic violence that has become prevalent in their city. The brutal beating death last June of Gordon Kuhtey along the banks of the Assiniboine River, a popular cruising area, sparked the formation of The Coalition Against Homophobic Violence (CAHV).

CAHV has developed five ambitious programs that they hope will help decrease incidences of violence, increase public safety and record incidences of gay bashing. According to Asher Webb, a CAHV spokesperson, crimes of violence against gays and lesbians are the most underreported crime today.

A whistle program will be instituted with free whistles being distributed through clubs, bars and community groups. People will be educated on when and how to use the whistle and how to respond when they hear someone whistling. Webb says the programs will basically street-proof people. CAHV also plans to have street patrols in place by next spring. Volunteers will be trained in crisis intervention, first aid and self-defense and then will be sent out in groups of at least four to patrol streets in the area of gay clubs and cruising spots. The

volunteers will be linked to one another and a central command centre by walkie-talkies or cellular phones.

CAHV plans to work to open a dialogue with Winnipeg police and to set up two-way communications between the police and the community. Webb said the gay/lesbian community hasn't had good communications with the police and that "the gay and lesbian community as a whole is generally untrusting of the police." Educational programs on homophobia and heterosexism will also be developed for presentation to the police and other agencies. Self-defense programs will be established for gay men and lesbians.

Three Winnipeg artists, Noreen Stevens, Kal Asmundson and Sheila Spence, have been working with CAHV to develop a public education program about homophobia. The artists produced a design which will be mounted on a billboard at the corner of River and Osborne. The billboard is controlled by the Plug-In Gallery and is used by different artists. The artwork for the billboard shows one man in three-quarter profile resting his head on another man's chest. Below the artwork is the inscription "Homophobia is Killing Us". The poster also contains a telephone number where people can call to hear a message about homophobia

as well as voice their opinions about the issue or report any incidents of violence.

In a telephone conversation with Mediacom, a company that produces and installs billboard art, they agreed to handle the artwork and install the billboard. When the artwork was presented to Mediacom they decided they couldn't handle it. They said they had thought the message was "Homophilia is Killing Us" when they agreed to take the job and cited passages from the Canadian Advertising Standards Code about taste and public decency to justify their refusal to handle the artwork.

CAHV has filed a complaint with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission about the refusal and the artwork has been taken to another company who agreed to do the job. Webb says the billboard will appear sometime in the next month and will remain in place for a month.

MEETING THE POLICE

(Saskatoon) Representatives of Saskatoon's lesbian and gay community met June 2 with Owen Maguire, chief of Saskatoon's police force. Kelly Faber, manager of Numbers nightclub, and Gens Hellquist, co-ordinator of Gay & Lesbian Health Services, requested the meeting to discuss concerns over gay bashing incidences in Saskatoon. A number of groups of teens have been seen driving around areas where gay men and lesbians meet apparently looking for someone to beat up. Reports have also been going around about gangs of teens taking baseball bats into Kiwanis Park, a popular cruising spot, looking for "queers". A group of teens living in a house at Queen St. and Fifth Avenue has also been verbally harassing anyone walking by that they think might be gay or lesbian.

Faber and Hellquist expressed their concerns about rising gay bashings in Saskatoon and suggested that incidences will most likely continue to rise as the issue of lesbian and gay rights comes up in the provincial legislature in the next month and the debate becomes more public. They also raised their concerns about the length of time it often takes patrol cars to respond to calls for help around gay bashings.

Maguire and Inspector J. G. Quinn appeared to be responsive Hellquist reported. Maguire made it clear that all police officers sign pledges to protect and serve and that included lesbians and gay men. He also acknowledged that some officers are homophobic but that he isn't willing to

accept that. "I was pleased with the response from the police," said Hellquist. "They appear willing to listen and look for solutions for this problem."

Maguire acknowledged that his department is currently understaffed by ten officers and was having problems responding quickly to all calls. He also stated that the police find it frustrating when gay people are unwilling to sign a complaint or testify in court when the police lay charges against bashers. Hellquist and Faber acknowledged that being afraid to testify in court because of fears of being outed. They also suggested that some people do not expect to get good service from the police so they don't report problems.

Maguire promised he would discuss the problem with senior officers in his department and get back to Faber and Hellquist. He indicated that he would like to establish a liaison officer in the department to handle complaints from the lesbian and gay community. Hellquist and Faber indicated they would work within the community to encourage people to report incidences of gay bashing to the department. Hellquist also indicated the willingness of his organization to provide education workshops for police officers so they are more aware of the needs and concerns of the gay and lesbian community.

Hellquist said Gay & Lesbian Health Services will be encouraging people who have been gay bashed to call their Gay & Lesbian Line to report the incidence to them so records of gay bashings can be established. The peer counsellors on their line would also talk to people who have

been bashed and support them in making a report to the police and going to court if it becomes necessary. Both parties agreed on the importance of bashers being caught so they won't go out and attack someone else.

The Gay & Lesbian Line, 665-1224, is open Tuesday to Saturday evenings from 7:30 - 10:30pm. The office is also open weekdays from noon to 4:30 for those wanting to call to report incidences of verbal or physical gay bashing. Hellquist said all calls will be kept confidential but it is important to be able to document incidences of gay bashing. "We can't complain to the police about them not dealing with gay bashers when we are unwilling to lodge complaints and testify in court," said Hellquist. "If we're going to stop bashers we must be prepared to force the justice system to deal with them," he added.

RIGHT AGAINST RIGHTS

(Saskatoon) While lesbians and gay men in Saskatchewan are waiting patiently to see if the NDP government will live up to its promise to change human rights legislation to protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, the right wing is maintaining a campaign of constant pressure on the government. At least two groups have been blitzing newspapers throughout the province with letters proclaiming the dire consequences that will occur if gays and lesbians are successful in their battle for equality.

REAL Women of Saskatchewan's Communications Director, Cecilia Forsyth has had letters published by numerous papers throughout the province. Forsyth usually begins her piece by stating her group is neither anti-gay or a hate group and then proceeds to explain why gays and lesbians shouldn't be granted "special status". She claims that three criteria, "an established history of 1) economic, 2) educational, and 3) cultural discrimination," have traditionally been used to protect groups from discrimination. According to her, gays and lesbians do not meet any of these criteria.

She cites recent American market surveys of readers of eight U.S. gay magazines to back up her claim that lesbians and gays aren't discriminated against economically. According to Forsyth, using the market survey statistics, gays and lesbians have a 58% higher household income than the general population and are three times as likely to have a university education or hold managerial or professional positions. She would have readers believe that these statistics are representative of all gays and lesbians.

She also claims the "homosexual community has bombarded the courts and government agencies to gain legal recognition of their lifestyle." According to her, the gay and lesbian agenda includes: "1) redefining the family to include homosexual lovers; 2) legalizing homosexual marriages; 3) forcing the military to ac-

cept homosexuals; 4) changing Canada's immigration laws as they relate to homosexuals; 5) demanding recognition of homosexual relationships in the Canadian census; and 6) forcing acceptance of homosexuals in Boy Scouts and Big Brother Associations." She then attempts to make a claim that gays and lesbians "already have all the rights that heterosexuals have."

"Gays and lesbians already have all the rights that heterosexuals have."

Dale Hassett, Director of The Coalition in Support of the Family, has also been busy writing letters to papers throughout the province. Hassett first came to attention during the last election when he distributed a 40-page booklet outlining the horrors awaiting if the NDP should win the election. At the top of his list was the "homosexual agenda". He, too, claims that gays and lesbians want "special rights and an extraordinary legal status". Outlawing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation would force businesses to hire gays and lesbians "against their will and most deeply held personal values." He also claims that landlords "could be coerced to rent to the same, removing any exercise of choice with even their own residential property." Hassett obviously hasn't read current human rights legislation which exempts people from the law if they are renting a suite in their own residential property.

Hassett goes on to assert that human rights legislation was "never meant to protect behaviour (especially that which offends moral sensibilities) but innate, morally-neutral birth characteristics. He says what is at stake is the rights of the majority.

Lesbian and gay activist groups in Saskatchewan are encouraging people to write to the government to urge them to change legislation to protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The government has now promised to make the changes in the next session of the legislature which could open as soon as February 1993. It appears that both sides in the debate will be waiting to see if the government does indeed go ahead with this promise after backing out of previous ones.

DISCRIMINATION IN SASKATCHEWAN

This is the first in a series of articles that will discuss the research into discrimination against Saskatchewan lesbians and gay men conducted by Regina's Equality For Gays & Lesbians Everywhere. In this article the topic is put in context, the method by which the research was done is described and the basic demographic information about the respondents is provided.

Canadian society has been experiencing a social revolution over the past twenty years that has brought unprecedented change to the ways in which Canadians live their lives. During the 1960s and 1970s a number of social movements helped to establish the changes that large numbers of our population now experience. The student movement, the women's liberation movement and gay liberation movement articulated changes in relationships in our society. The gay liberation movement evolved during the early 1970s as gay men and lesbians began to assert their right to love whomever they chose. Groups that had previously been in a subordinate position in society such as women, people of African origin, people of Aboriginal origin, people with disabilities and lesbians and gay people have all demanded that they be treated equally. This is a democratic revolution which is changing the face of our society.

The effects of the efforts made by lesbians and gay men over the past twenty years have included some tangible results in the form of human rights legislation in seven provinces and one territory which includes sexual orientation as an area of protection. As well, numerous unions, organizations, municipalities, universities, etc. protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination. In the past year a number of important court cases have been waged. In 1991 same-sex partners in B.C. won the right to benefits as heterosexual partners. In August 1992 the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that the Canadian Human Rights Act must now be applied to lesbians and gay men. In October 1992 the military ban on homosexuals was determined to be in conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These are a few of the cases that have been fought and won.

There are those who would concede that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does indeed protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination and that it is a matter of time before all rights will be won, at least at the legislative level.

As of June 25 1993 Saskatchewan became the seventh province in Canada to add sexual orientation to its Human Rights Code. This action followed 9 years of governing by the openly homophobic Devine government. During that time the situation of lesbians and gay men in Saskatchewan was very bad indeed as the Devine government encouraged discrimination against lesbians and gay men. In Saskatchewan, it has always been difficult for lesbians and gay men to live openly and freely and unlike the large urban centres, where many lesbians and gay men from this province migrate to, there is no "gay ghetto" where it is possible to find a small space that belongs to them. As a result, the lesbian and gay male communities of this province are invisible, not only to the general population, but to a very large extent, to itself. People are either too afraid to venture out into the community or do not find many options open to them when they do venture out. Therefore, many people are very isolated, lacking a support system of other lesbians or gay men.

There is little information available about this community. Members of EGALE Regina decided to conduct some research on discrimination against lesbians and gay men in Saskatchewan. In this series of articles we will present some of our findings. This research gives us some information about a small sample of lesbians and gay men who discuss discrimination experiences against themselves and others because of their sexual orientation. We identify the nature of that discrimination with respect to a number of social institutions but also explore with our respondents the uniqueness of this discrimination due to the secrecy and silence that lesbians and gay men live in because of their fear of telling people about their sexual orientation. Many, if not most, gay men and lesbians experience alienation from their families when they come out to themselves and their community, and of course, they experience alienation from much of the dominant society. We ex-

plored the "coming out" process with our respondents and their own feelings about their sexuality.

Questionnaires were distributed to 250 people. The questionnaires were completed by 78 people, 51 females and 27 males. There were four sections to the questionnaire. Section A includes demographic information about the respondents. Section B includes information on relationship status including same and opposite sex relationships and number and ages of children they have. Section C consists of experiences of discrimination. Section D focuses on sexual and gender identity.

The respondents to this survey were predominantly white (95%) and English speaking (95%). The age range was from 15 to over 40, with 50% being between 30 and 39, 25.7% being over 40 and 23% being 15 to 29. Most (53.8) respondents were born in Saskatchewan. 66.7% currently reside in a city with over 100,000 population. 21.8% reside in communities of less than 5,000 population.

In their adult life, 94.9% of all respondents have been involved in a sexual and/or intimate relationship with a member of the same sex. As well, 69.2% of all respondents had been in a sexual/intimate relationship with a member of the opposite sex.

Most respondents do not have any children (74.4%). Only 25.6% reported having children (1% of men and 33% of women) with 21.8% having less than three children. Most respondents who have children live with their children.

We asked respondents to define their current status in heterosexual terms. This showed that 2.6% are currently married, 1.3% are living common-law, 3.8% are separated, 14.1% are divorced and 73.1% are none of the above. 5.1% did not respond. A few respondents (5.1%) are currently involved in a heterosexual relationship. Of those, 2.6 have been in the relationship for less than 6 months and 3.8% have been in the relationship for more than five years.

62.8% of respondents are currently involved in a gay or lesbian relationship.

Some respondents, (29.5% - 55% of males and 16% of females) are involved in casual and infrequent sexual encounters including one-night stands. 10.3% of respondents are involved in one or more affairs. A small percentage (14.1%) are involved in an intimate, non-sexual relationship with a companion or partner. 51.3% of respondents (29.6% of males and 62.7% of females) are in a primary relationship with a person of the same sex.

In the next issue of *Perceptions* we will look at the discrimination experienced by gay men and lesbians in various institutions in society and the impact this had on the individual.

FIRED FOR BEING QUEER

(Saskatoon) Kim Shaw is considering launching lawsuits and filing complaints with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission after he was fired from his job with Scott Paper. Scott Paper manufactures products like Purex toilet tissue, Scotties facial tissues, Viva paper towels and Scott towels. Shaw, who has a Bachelor of Commerce degree, had been with the company for 11 years and was working as the district sales manager when he was informed his services were no longer needed. During his time with the company Shaw was married with two children but he separated from his wife three years ago and started the coming out process shortly after. Shaw believes he was fired because he is gay and that didn't fit with the corporation's attempt to present a family image.

Scott Paper conducted performance reviews with Shaw each December since he joined the company. Last year his supervisor, Earl Huson, Western Canada Sales Manager, informed Shaw that he was ready for a move up the corporate ladder immediately and that he had the ability to go at least three or four steps further up in the company. The company wanted to move Shaw up into a higher position as soon as one came open but Shaw wasn't interested in moving at that time.

Things began to change after Shaw attended a Day Without Art event last December and was seen on television as part of the audience. Shortly after, buyers he dealt with at Federated Co-op, the wholesaler that supplies Co-op stores throughout the west, began to give Shaw the cold shoulder. Sources at Federated informed Shaw that the day after the television program appeared some people were heard to say in the coffee room that they couldn't understand how Shaw could embarrass his company by attending a gay function.

Things began to get worse with the Federated employees Shaw had to deal with in his business. Federated was Shaw's biggest customer but Dennis Currie, Federat-

ed's Grocery Advertising Manager, refused to deal with Shaw and refused to return calls and "basically started to shun me," Shaw said. Shaw's sales to Federated dropped as the comments about him being gay continued to be made around the offices. Federated employee Harold Lang reportedly would stand up in the office and yell for everyone to hear, "Kim Shaw, that fucking faggot." Shaw says the comments he heard were being made behind closed doors were very abusive.

"If I fight, it could ruin my chance of a career. If I can't win, I can at least make an example of the companies."

Shaw claims that Federated is basically a repressive environment for any minority to work in. An ex-employee, who informed Shaw about many of the comments going around about him, and who is willing to testify for Shaw if he decides to go to court, told him of an experience she had with her superior. She was called into the man's office and was told she had three strikes against her because she was a woman, was Egyptian and was educated at the University. He went on to tell her it was a good thing she had on a wedding band or else she'd be "a goddammed lesbian" and he'd have to fire her.

Shaw says both Federated and Scott Paper are work environments with a philosophy that is very middle class and very intolerant of people's differences. At Scott Paper he regularly had to listen to racist jokes and jokes about gays and lesbians. Scott Paper has a video that is used with new customers. In one attempt to humour customers there's a scene where a man walks into a cubicle of a public washroom only to discover that there is no toilet paper available when he needs it. He reaches under the cubicle into the next

one looking for toilet paper. An obviously gay man is shown sitting in that cubicle and he immediately begins to caress the hand of the unsuspecting man. Shaw also said he attended an evening of entertainment put on by Federated at their annual food fair. Two American entertainers were hired to provide comedy which Shaw says was mostly at the expense of aboriginals, women, gays and lesbians. "It's fine to laugh and joke about minorities in both environments," said Shaw.

Shaw was aware that his boss was friendly with and in regular contact with those at Federated who were shunning him and by June of this year he noticed he was getting the cold shoulder from his boss. At this year's Federated food fair his boss and other Scott Paper employees were invited to attend a reception and golf tournament but Shaw did not receive his usual invitation to attend.

In September of this year Shaw got an early performance review instead of the regular one in December. Huson informed him that they weren't pleased with his performance. Nine months after being told that he was ready to advance with the company he was informed that he didn't have any leadership ability.

In early November Shaw went to Huson and officially informed him that he was gay and reported the incidences with Federated although he was sure Huson already knew. Huson claimed he was not aware of Shaw's lifestyle decision and that it had no affect on his negative performance review. He suggested that perhaps Shaw should resign as he didn't sound happy with his work. Shaw refused to resign and pointed out that other customers of his were happy with his work and that even his sales to Federated were on their way up to original levels.

On November 30, Huson flew into Saskatoon and met with Shaw's customers to inform them that Shaw no longer worked

(continued on page 12)

(continued from page 11)

for Scott Paper. Huson informed Shaw that they were not happy with his performance and that he was being let go effective December 10 although they didn't want him to have any further contact with Scott Paper customers. Shaw was given a severance package and asked to sign a letter of resignation. He was told that if he didn't sign the resignation letter it wouldn't affect his severance package but would affect his ability to find employment in the field. "They're blackmailing me, in essence," Shaw said. "If I sign the letter of resignation they will give me a good reference. If I don't, they won't give me good references when I look for other work." Shaw didn't sign the letter.

Shaw said he is happy that the long ordeal is over but the severance package is "not enough, given the fact that they've ruined my career." After his meeting with Huson a company-paid employment counsellor came in to inform Shaw that he didn't think it would be wise to pursue Federated or Scott Paper in court as it would ruin his chances of future employment.

Shaw says he is angry about the way he was treated by both Scott Paper and Federated. "I often find myself feeling really pissed off and I've been having bizarre dreams lately where I feel paralyzed and unable to respond to what is happening." He is considering filing suit against both and/or taking them to the Human Rights Commission. His concern is that the court cases could be long and costly and would end up costing him most of his severance package. Shaw is feeling caught right now. "If I fight, it could ruin my chance of a career," he said. "If I can't win, I can at least make an example of the companies," he added.

BASHINGS ON THE RISE

(Saskatoon) It has been a long hot summer in Saskatoon, with an increased number of gay and lesbian bashings being reported. Not only have bashings been reported in the area of Kiwanis Park, a popular cruising area, but throughout the downtown area.

"What is particularly worrisome," said Gens Hellquist executive director of Gay & Lesbian Health Services, "is that there appears to be well-organized gangs laying in wait for gay men or lesbians to show up. We hear different reports about groups that sound very similar."

Many of the bashings have occurred in and around Kiwanis Park, which has been a cruising area for gay men for many years. In August, one man was jumped and beaten by four young guys wielding two-by-fours. He suffered a fractured skull and spent three days in the hospital and is still off work recovering two months after the attack. Others have reported seeing a similar group carrying two-by-fours.

In October, two lesbians were attacked in the downtown area. Elise and Candace were walking home from a local gay club when they were jumped by three men and two women. They believe the group had followed them from the club. The gang got them on the ground and proceeded to

kick them on their heads and bodies.

"It's senseless, there's just no reason," said Elise, who is still feeling the effects of the bashing three weeks after it happened. "It just goes to show you don't have to be in Toronto to be gay-bashed. It happens plenty here in our little city," she added.

*"You don't
have to be in
Toronto to be
gay-bashed."*

Not only gay people are being affected by the gay-bashings. A young straight man had his nose broken when he was bashed coming out of a club where gay people are known to go.

To date no charges have been laid in any of the bashings even though the licence plate of the group who assaulted the two women is known. The police also deny that there has been a rise in the number of

bashings. They claim there has only been a rise in the number of those bashings reported.

"I'm angry about the poor response from the police," said Hellquist. "We spoke to them last year about the bashings and Chief Maguire assured us he was concerned about them also. I am still waiting for him to return my calls about the latest spate of bashings. If the police believe bashings aren't on the increase they are sadly mistaken," Hellquist added. "We have heard substantially more reports of bashings and near bashings this year. Many of this year's bashing were especially violent and it was fortunate that someone didn't get killed."

The Board of Gay & Lesbian Health Services has discussed the problems with bashings and is starting to work on a project to address the violence and help people street-proof themselves. "GLHS is concerned about this problem," said Hellquist. "The Board and Program Committee will be looking at ways to address the problem to make the streets of Saskatoon safer for gay men and lesbians. We would welcome anyone who wants to volunteer some time to help deal with this situation," he added.

RESPONDING TO THE VIOLENCE

(Saskatoon) Gay men and lesbians are organizing to respond to the increasing levels of violence and gay bashings that are taking place in Saskatoon. 1994 saw an increase in the number of bashings occurring as well as an increase in the level of violence with those bashings. On November 15 two dozen people met at Gay & Lesbian Health Services to discuss what can be done. The meeting was attended by two officers from the morality squad of the City Police as well as representatives of the Sexual Assault Centre, AIDS Saskatoon and the Downtown Working Group.

A number of gay men present at the meeting talked about their experiences of being bashed in Saskatoon. Many of the lesbians and gay men expressed their growing discomfort with being out on the streets after dark although some instances of bashing have occurred during the day in the crowded downtown.

The two representatives of the Police Department, who had been ordered to attend the meeting, explained that the police do not recognize gay bashing instead lumping it in with all assaults. They also claimed that they have not seen an increase in the number of assaults against gay men and lesbians. They explained to the meeting how people should approach the department to file a complaint about assaults.

Participants at the meeting decided to spend the winter organizing a number of responses to bashings. Gay & Lesbian Health Services will approach the Police Chief to request sensitivity training for officers in his department. It was felt that police officers need to understand the difficulties that gay men and lesbians face when reporting bashings especially the possibility of being further outed if they have to appear in court. Many people also felt the police were not very supportive to people who reported being bashed. One problem that the police stated was that they are not getting many

"...some instances of bashing have occurred during the day in the crowded downtown."

reports about bashings so it is difficult for them to take any action.

A GLHS committee will also work on updating their pamphlet on what to do when one has been bashed. The pamphlet will then be circulated throughout the gay and lesbian community. A campaign will also be instituted to encourage people to report any instances of bashings to the police as well as to GLHS. GLHS

staff and volunteers are available to go with people who have been bashed to the police or to the hospital. GLHS will also discuss with the Sexual Assault Centre the possibility of them providing support and assistance during hours that GLHS is not open.

The committee will also look at ways to educate gay men and lesbians about ways to keep themselves safe while on the streets. This may include instituting a series of self-defense workshops or street proofing workshops.

The GLHS bashing committee is looking for any gay men, lesbians or friends who want to work on ways to make Saskatoon a safer place to live. Anyone interested in working on the committee can contact GLHS at 665-1224 to find out about the next meeting.

HOMOPHOBIA AT COLLEGE

(Winnipeg) Bruce Smith is attempting to start a gay and lesbian group at Winnipeg's Red River Community College but he is having to deal with homophobia and intimidation. Smith is a Computer Analyst student at the College which has 4,000 students in vocational and professional programs. The College has never before had a lesbian and gay organization on the campus.

Smith said he started the group to meet other lesbians and gay men at school as well as providing a means for him to be out at school, something he is in other areas of his life. Smith said the group has only attracted a small handful of people to the meetings so far. He suggests that the intimidation he has faced in getting the group started is probably keeping many people away.

Smith says he has been verbally harassed and called a "fucking faggot" while putting up posters advertising the group around campus. Posters are routinely defaced or torn down shortly after they appear. One poster was defaced with an arrow pointed at Smith's name with "You're dead" written by the arrow. He added that he has received threatening messages on his answering machine as well.

Smith feels that campus Security has not been very helpful when he reported the defacement of posters. He was told that there is no campus policy to address the defacement of posters.

Smith would like to receive official recognition for the group from the Student Association (SA) but he needs ten signatures before the group can be formally recognized. Such formal recognition would guarantee the group meeting space as well as access to equipment and funds for conferences. The group would also be eligible for help from the SA in publicizing group activities.

Randy Rummery, president of the Student Association, said the Association is supportive of Smith in his efforts to start a gay and lesbian group on campus. He added that the SA has also not spoken out about the harassment Smith had faced in his efforts to get the group established.

NO FREEDOM TO READ

(Fraser Valley, BC) Residents of the Fraser Valley in BC had less freedom about what they could read in their public libraries when Freedom To Read Week came around in February. In attempts to have free copies of *XTRA! West* removed from the libraries they banned the distribution of all free publications that carry advertising from all Valley libraries.

The dispute about *XTRA! West* has been simmering since last fall when religious groups vowed to get rid of sodomite material from their libraries. In November the Fraser Valley Regional Library (FVRL) board voted to allow libraries under their jurisdiction to remove *XTRA! West* if they thought it contravened community standards or if petitions against a publication were presented to the board.

Shortly after banning *XTRA! West* the board sought legal opinion and discovered that their decision was believed to contravene the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Abbotsford City Councillor Mark Warawa, who has been one of the leaders in the fight to ban *XTRA! West*, suggested that they might have to use the 'notwithstanding clause' in the Charter to prevent the magazine from being distributed at the library. He also added that city

council might withhold funds for the construction of a new library in Abbotsford if the paper wasn't banned.

Langley Municipal Councillor Muriel Arnason was one of the few elected officials to stand up and defend libraries distributing *XTRA! West*. "I am the only one on the Langley library board old

*The dispute
about XTRA!
West has been
simmering
since last fall...*

enough to remember Germans burning books in an era of concentration camps where Jews as well as lesbians and gays were murdered by the Nazis," she said.

Public meetings were held in the valley with supporters and opponents of the ban speaking out. Supporters of the ban included groups like REAL Women, Community Impact Committee and the Abbotsford Ministerial Association. Op-

ponents of the ban included *XTRA! West*, the BC Civil Liberties Association, the December 9 Coalition and the Professional Librarians Association.

In efforts to not contravene the Charter of Rights and Freedoms the FVRL board passed a motion in February to ban all free publications that carry advertising from libraries under their jurisdiction. As many as 150 different community publications will no longer be available at libraries in the Fraser Valley.

The Fraser Valley is not the only place where *XTRA!* publications are no longer available. In January the Hamilton Library Board voted to ban all publications that are not published in the Hamilton area. Board members claimed the decision wasn't based on homophobia but rather space issues.

Many doubt the veracity of that rationale as the availability of *XTRA!* in Hamilton was an issue during last year's municipal elections in that city.

One Hamilton resident, Pam Wagner, has announced that she will file a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission over the Hamilton decision.

FREEDOM TO READ RESTORED

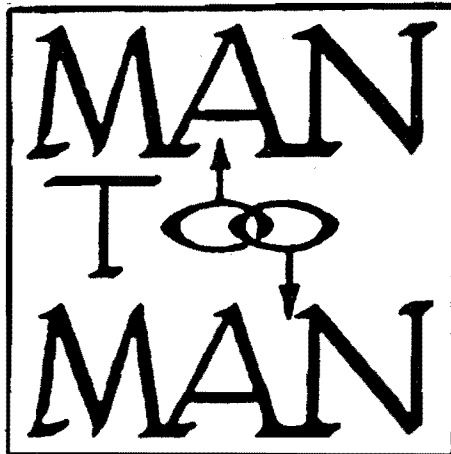
(Fraser Valley, B.C.) In a reversal of its decision to ban all free periodicals that contain advertising, the Fraser Valley library board appears set to vote to return magazines like *Angles* and *XTRA! West* to the shelves. The original ban on periodicals with advertising was designed to keep out *XTRA! West*, but do it in such a way as to appear that the board was not discriminating. (See "No Freedom To Read", *PERCEPTIONS*, March 8, 1995)

The publisher of *XTRA! West*, Fred Lee, was in the midst of organizing a campaign which would have involved all the organizations affected by the ban and was contemplating a court challenge to the library board's decision. *XTRA! West* con-

tends that the board tried to ban the newspaper indirectly because it could not do so directly. There was enough said negatively about *XTRA! West* to prove the case, he said. The original board decision was motivated by a petition signed by over 7500 people in the Fraser Valley area.

The library board replaced its original motion to ban all periodicals with advertising with one to allow them back but to place periodicals with sexually explicit content out of sight, to protect the children and the tender sensibilities of the easily offended. From now on, in order to read *Angles* or *XTRA! West*, patrons will have to ask for them from library staff. The motion will go to a vote after the board receives a legal opinion on it. Representatives of *XTRA! West* fear that keep-

ing the periodical behind the library counter will be intimidating to the people who wish to read it and in effect may have the same result as an outright ban. "Nothing will change with this new policy. It will be same as what was happening before."



MAN TOO MAN

(Saskatoon) Summer has finally arrived in Saskatoon and if you're a lover of nature you may soon see the Man Too Man Outreach Workers out in the parks at night. As in past years, the Man Too Man project of AIDS Saskatoon will be out to provide safer sex education where men congregate. Man Too Man volunteers will be wearing the Man Too Man t-shirt and will be available to anyone seeking information, condoms, lube and so on. The information and materials are provided free of charge for the asking. "If you're down in the park and see one of us, stop and say hello," says Man Too Man coordinator Jeff Dodds.

This year, in conjunction with Gay & Lesbian Health Services, Man Too Man will be working to improve the overall safety of men in public spaces, safety that extends beyond sex. For many, public spaces can be an exciting way to meet new people. It can also be a dangerous place if precautions aren't taken. This year, programs are being developed to track the incidence of assaults directed towards gays and lesbians and new information about precautions will be released. More information can be obtained by calling GLHS at 665-1224.

All of the Outreach Workers will be working on the boundaries of the park areas and may be able to diffuse problems before they escalate into something serious. All workers will carry whistles again this year as a means of calling for help from other workers or scaring off possible attackers. "If you hear a whistle in the park you'll know it is probably one of us but don't assume you're more secure because

of it. "Please continue to take cautions when venturing out," Dodds said.

Man Too Man will soon begin expanding into other areas of Outreach within the community of men who have sex with men. In order to do this as consistently and effectively as possible, the Man Too Man Project is looking for more volunteers. Man Too Man can be a very interesting and fun project to get involved in. "We need men who are comfortable with their own sexuality and looking to contribute in the fight against AIDS," said Dodds. If you're interested, call AIDS Saskatoon at 242-5005 and ask for Jeff for more information.

"Perhaps volunteering takes too much of your time. Well, there are other ways to contribute," said Dodds. They will be developing an advisory committee of mature gay men who have been in the community for several years now. This committee will be asked to help guide the work of Man Too Man as it relates to men who have been sexually active for a longer period of time. Two other committees will also be struck; one for gay youth and another for HIV+ gay men. Again, you can call the office and let them know you're interested in one or more committees. They are looking for a contribution of about three hours a month.

"Maybe you've been thinking of hosting a party in your home. How about a safer-sex party?" Dodds asks. By calling him he can make arrangements for you to host such a party in your home. All that is needed is for hosts to provide the place and the guest list—Man Too Man will do the rest. Safer sex parties can be a fun way for men to learn more about eroticism in these days of AIDS, whether the guests are new to the gay scene or have been out for years. The parties are designed to be fun, erotic and educational. The service is provided free but Dodds says they need about four weeks notice to get all the arrangements made.

Man Too Man is a community service provided by AIDS Saskatoon to men who have sex with men. If there are comments or concerns or perhaps questions that need answered, information can be obtained by calling AIDS Saskatoon anytime during office hours.

FIGHTING BACK

(Winnipeg) Glen Parbery, a Winnipeg gay man, has decided that he is going to fight back against the four young men who bashed him on a downtown street in June. He has launched a campaign to have three of the men, who were seventeen at the time of the assault, tried in adult court. The fourth basher was eighteen and will automatically be tried as an adult.

Parbery has launched a letter-writing campaign to Manitoba justice minister Rosemary Vodrey demanding that the three seventeen-year-olds be tried as adults. "I want them raised to adult court so they have a permanent record of the incident on their file just like I have a permanent record of the criminal incident in my memory," Parbery said.

Parbery was attacked as he walked home from a friend's apartment. He had been seeking consolation from the friend after losing his job that day. As he walked down Broadway he was approached by the four young men, one of whom was carrying a baseball bat, who engaged him in a yelling match. The four men then jumped Parbery and began kicking and bashing him. Fortunately, two passers-by were able to attract the attention of police who were parked a short distance away. The four men were quickly arrested by the police. The men have been charged with assault causing bodily harm and one has also been charged with possession of a weapon dangerous to the public peace.

Parbery was knocked unconscious and received cuts and bruises to his face during the assault. "I was in a state of shock for a couple of days afterward and then became incredibly angry," Parbery said. "I'm not willing to have this plea-bargained down," he added. "I want justice to prevail."

Cathy Everett, acting senior crown attorney for youth prosecutions, said she was unable to comment on the case as it was before the courts. She said any decision about trying the case in adult court must take into consideration previous criminal records, the seriousness of the offence and the prospect for rehabilitation.

Winnipeg gay activist Chris Vogel said he

supports Parbery's action to have the youths tried in adult court. It's an opportunity for the justice system to send a strong message that gay bashing will be dealt with seriously, he added.

Parbery wants people to write justice minister Vodrey, calling for the youths to be tried as adults. Letters can be sent to The Honourable Rosemary Vodrey, Minister of Justice and Attorney-General, Room 104, Legislative Building, 4350 Broadway, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0V8.

PERCEPTIONS

FIREBOMBS ON THE PRAIRIES

(Lloydminster) Two gay men in Lloydminster recently found themselves the target of a series of attacks from homophobic elements in this city which straddles the Saskatchewan and Alberta border. John Nelson says he and his roommate Lyle Gardiner have been targeted because they are gay.

"Life in the hinterlands does have its drawbacks," said Nelson. "Outside of major metropolitan areas, one can easily run afoul of very conservative and perhaps twisted morals when discovered or outed." He added that the incidents he and his roommate faced were only part of a series of attacks on gays and lesbians and those suspected of being homosexual in the Border City.

The two men said the local detachment of the R.C.M.P. knocked on their door in the evening of October 27 to inform them that they were likely to become the targets of homophobic violence. Later that evening Nelson said he was attacked by a young man on his front lawn. Nelson is a large man who doesn't hesitate to defend himself so he was soon engaged in a brawl with the attacker. Nelson claims the brawl occurred in "full view of an under-cover mountie parked a few doors away."

Nelson said he wasn't hurt in the incident but was shocked and angry about the

attack. He reported the incident to the R.C.M.P. only to be informed by the attending Corporal that the two men were likely going to be firebombed that evening. The police said they had received a Crimestopper report about the planned firebombing. Nelson said he was surprised that the police appeared to have been aware of the matter for quite some time.

Later that night Nelson spotted two men entering his yard and attempting to light a Molotov cocktail. He believes the firebomb was going to be tossed at an outbuilding on his property. The two men were driving an older model Dodge van which Nelson believes was used in the earlier attack on him. The two men proved to be unsuccessful in their attempt to firebomb Nelson's property.

Nelson said the R.C.M.P. later arrested two area men and charged them with causing a disturbance by fighting. They also laid vehicle offence charges against four young offenders believed to be involved with these incidents.

According to Nelson, the R.C.M.P. are dismissing these attacks as random and unusual. Nelson doesn't believe the attacks are either unusual or random. He and his roommate are packing up and planning to move away by early December. A group of friends of the two men

have put into place several security measures to prevent future problems until the men are able to get out of town.

Nelson said he is satisfied with the response by the R.C.M.P. but would have preferred to see charges of assault and attempted arson laid against the young men arrested. He added that gays and lesbians in the area have never established formal relations with the police because most are not out of the closet.

Nelson claims there have been other similar incidents in the area recently but gay men are reluctant to discuss the problems with the police. He added that he believes the incidents are tied into activities by "a loosely organized chapter of the Ku Klux Klan." He claims that a Chinese family in the area had a five foot cross burned on their front lawn recently and that black families have also experienced similar incidents in the past.

Like many smaller prairie cities, Lloydminster has no visible lesbian and gay community. A few individuals in the area are part of a small support group for gays, lesbians and their families that meets monthly in either Maidstone or Lashburn, two small towns east of Lloydminster. The majority are either hidden in the closet or travel to Edmonton or Saskatoon to interact with the lesbian and gay community.

Some man-to-man relationships involve abuse but this is something we're not really talking about in our community.

I'm 30 years old and recently was involved in a relationship with another man I'll call "Joe". I experienced emotional, physical, financial and verbal abuse with Joe.

I want other people to know that it's alright for men to admit that they experience low self-esteem and that they don't have to take abuse such as I did. I want to tell other men who are in an abusive relationship to get out.

I'm not a stupid person, but in hindsight I see that I went into the relationship with Joe blindly. My longest previous relationship had lasted only four months so I was really anxious for this one to last.

There were probably signs at the beginning to indicate that Joe was not the kind of person he claimed to be. He said he didn't drink much and that he was very affectionate; he said he liked to cuddle up to people, to be physically close, either sexually or non-sexually. What he said about himself were the very things I was looking for. I thought we had a good chance of lasting.

I didn't realize it at the time, although later I learned that people who knew me saw signs of it. I had low self-esteem. "Why would anyone want a fat guy like me?"

The first of our problems involved money and drinking. He was running up long-distance telephone bills and not paying his share. He said he didn't have the money and I believed he would pay later. But his money was spent on drinking and when he drank I suffered verbal abuse.

Within two months I started to suspect that Joe was being unfaithful. At first, I was very upset but I believed his excuses as to who these people were that he was seeing. When I later discovered the truth I was upset the most about his lying. He regained some of my trust by telling the truth (about anything) but I always had some doubt. He never did stop being unfaithful.

Between two and six months into our relationship, Joe tried to commit suicide and wound up in a psychiatric ward. "Was this a ploy to control me?" I was so confused not knowing what was going on. He spent two weeks in the hospital and I visited him when I could. He was juggling my visits with visits from his latest 'fling' but I took his word that they were just friends.

After leaving the hospital Joe went on a drinking binge. I ran into him at one of the bars and he was very abusive to me. Not feeling safe, I stayed in a motel that night only to learn later that he hadn't returned home that night either. As I called around to find out where he was I learned what was really going on: he was cheating and lying. I was feeling so hurt and angry that I confronted him the next day. I hoped he would see my anger and tears and realize how much he meant to me. I told him I didn't want him lying to me any more. It wasn't the cheating that made me angry—it was the lying.

I thought the psychiatric treatment and his seeing my anger would make Joe realize that we could restart our relationship as we wanted it to be. There was something that still attracted me to him and that attraction continued to grow. Coming from an alcoholic family, I felt his seeing me sober would help him come around. I didn't want to change Joe, but I did want to help him start feeling cared for as a person.

So I stayed in the relationship. He kept drinking, more and more often, and then he hit me for the first time. I came out of that with a black eye. I felt embarrassed and I wondered, "What am I doing wrong?" I could no longer trust Joe when he drank, even though he promised it wouldn't happen again. "What would prevent him from doing this to me again? Why was he being like this?" I was confused and felt I had lost control of myself and my self-esteem was shot. I didn't care about my appearance, personal hygiene or anything.

We made our first move thinking that a new location and new scenery would put the bad times behind us. That worked for a while but Joe kept drinking and the affairs started

up again. The bills started piling up and one particular guy kept hanging around, phoning and coming to the apartment. I told Joe, "Either you do something about this situation or I'm gone."

Joe put himself in a three-week alcohol treatment program and joined AA. He claimed he was doing this for the relationship. I found a support group for myself and things seemed to get better. Six weeks later Joe fell off the wagon, got roaring drunk and didn't come home. The lying as well as the drinking had started again and I later learned that he sometimes went to the bar instead of his AA meetings.

He began to drink more and more, often lying to me and staying away from home. I was angry again, and sexually frustrated. There was little physical affection between us and Joe would turn away when I tried to kiss him. Because I wasn't getting any affection I started having one-night stands.

Months passed and it was our second Christmas Eve. Joe disappeared, out drinking again. Shortly after I got home from work, Joe returned, obnoxious and roaring drunk. I said to myself, "Oh, no, not again!" and was about to leave when he grabbed my jacket and said "If you want to spend Christmas here at home with me, you'd better not leave". All I said was "Leave me alone, you alcoholic." As I struggled to get away from Joe he hit me in the face sending my glasses flying. This may have been just an accident, because we were struggling, but it felt like another beating. I managed to grab my glasses and jacket and escape.

On Christmas Day we talked by phone and I asked him if he could remember what happened. He admitted he did and said he wanted a few days alone to himself. When I returned to the apartment a few days later I was starting to take charge of things and was determined that Joe and I would sit down and discuss what happened. He said he had gotten drunk because his father had told him that he didn't want him home for Christmas. I said I accepted the excuse but didn't really believe him. It was still easier for me to stay than to go.

More months passed and Joe kept on drinking. He became quite depressed and admitted himself to the psychiatric ward and started another treatment program. I was relieved because I didn't have to worry about his drinking and beating me again.

I was glad to be alone and developed a sense of freedom. It was an opportunity to ask myself, "Is this relationship really worth it?" Within three weeks I decided that, although I still loved Joe, it wasn't. But how do you get out of love?

I started seeing a counsellor in an attempt to regain my self-esteem. I learned how to think more about myself and to acknowledge that I was a good person. I was meeting other men and discovered that other men found me attractive, which boosted my self-esteem. I was learning about other people's lives which helped me see that I wasn't the only person who hasn't had a great life. Joe had lied to me about his affairs, but I didn't keep anything from him. Joe didn't care, saying, "If you have to do it, do it." Finally, I was starting to care more about myself than him.

I met a man through a companion wanted ad in a newspaper and attended a Gay Fathers meeting with him. At the meeting I met Carl Konarsky, the first of the people I call my 'healers.' Carl is a leatherman and I had always had a low opinion of such people, but I also had a high kink for pain. Carl gave me a sense of hope that led me to a better understanding of what leathermen are about. I have heard him say, "A man can be a jerk, both in leather and out of leather."

It was Christmas time again and I spent it with my biological family. Joe and I didn't even exchange presents. I was getting my self-esteem back and was starting to fall out

of love.

Early in the new year Joe began disappearing for long periods of time. I got involved in helping with the Drummer Contest where I met Steve Fediuk and boy Greg. They became two more of my 'healers.'

When Joe reappeared, he recognized the strength I was gaining from my involvement with The Drummer Contest. He said to me, "Why are you getting involved in this? You're no leatherman and you don't like leathermen." I told him I was identifying with a group that understands my kink for pain. Then he disappeared once again.

He surfaced four months later and I felt I couldn't turn him away; technically it was his apartment because his name was still on the lease. But the next day he went on a drinking binge. When he returned that night he saw my leather belt and said, "If you want pain, I'm going to give you pain." He started hitting me with his fists and broke my glasses. I managed to escape and spent the night at my parents. When I returned the next day I'd had enough and kicked Joe out. I felt strong and Joe left the apartment never to return.

Over the next couple of months I was wondering, "Why was he doing this to me?" I talked with my minister, Stan Richards of the MCC of Winnipeg. He gave me the gift of optimism, that there is hope for my life.

During my time of sorrow I was having one-night stands—safely. My mind was telling me, "No, I don't want a relationship or commitment, but I do want to be with somebody." Not just for the sex, but for the sense of comfort that comes from knowing someone is there.

During my first Christmas after the breakup I talked freely with a lesbian friend of mine. She told me that it was all right for me to be a Scrooge for that Christmas, considering everything I had gone through. She gave me the gift of openness which allows me to speak freely and get things out in the open.

During my healing time Steve taught me how to present myself as a gay person to the gay community. I couldn't do that before; I didn't know how. I learned that you should be proud of yourself no matter who you are. That included me. Boy Greg taught me how to respect people by allowing me to see how much he respected Steve.

I was meeting many new people when my relationship with Joe was ending. One such person was Don Bastian, who gave me the gift of trust during my healing. He put his faith in me, making it possible for me to trust him. I had lost the ability to trust people during my relationship with Joe.

Another person who has given me a gift of healing is Duane Baker, who gave me friendship. I have been able to rely on Duane in many ways and to talk with him about many things, including those painful years with Joe.

There are abusive relationships between men. We are just beginning to talk about it, as I have done in this article. But that is not enough. We must find the strength to get out of these relationships. My strength came from the healing gifts of my friends and from reading Greg Louganis' autobiography, *Breaking the Surface*. Don't be afraid to talk about it—it really does help. And don't go back for more abuse. You will find the courage to say, "No, I'm not going to let this happen to me anymore." ❀

HEPPNER'S HOT AGAIN

Just last week I had arrived at my office, elated by the opportunity to have a day free from appointments and meetings. Not long after my arrival, the telephone brought an interesting question from the CBC Radio reporter in Regina: "Had I heard that we were under attack by the conservatives?" Wondering if this wasn't some sort of broad enquiry about our society's structure, I replied, "We've always been under attack from conservatives. I hardly think that's news..." What I failed to understand was that the reporter was, in fact, referring to the provincial Progressive Conservative party, through the statements of one Ben Heppner, MLA for Rosthern. Not at all clear as to why Mr. Heppner was worked up this time, I asked for more information. "Well," said the reporter, "it seems he's offended by some S/M literature you have in your agency for public distribution." And so began my day.

Ben Heppner is not new to this world of mine. He came out ranting about the Regina Queer Film Festival for being hosted at the Regina Public Library (a poor use of taxpayers' money) and then he went on a tear because the Department of Education had 1,000 wooden condom demonstrators in storage for use in schools. (Being ever so accurate and not wanting to inflame public sentiment, Mr. Heppner insisted on referring to them as wooden penises.) The "woodies" were also set up as a poor use of public money. Now it's our Safe S/M brochure, among others we carry, on the basis that the material is unnecessarily graphic. (We use words like *fuck*, but you probably never use, or have heard, that word.)


Mr. Heppner's contention, according to his press release, is that the provincial government's contribution of \$50,000 should not be spent to support such pornographic material. Of course, that's not his real issue at all when one considers his past rantings. What this man's agenda is really about is simply a matter of him pushing his moral agenda under the guise of "the sanctity of public money." Forgetting that people who "fuck" also pay tax, Mr. Heppner chose to attack the good work being done at the community level with no appreciation for the time-tested prevention strategies that have brought us to this point. Obviously unaware that the community-based education movement understands what is effective, he wants all material rewritten or funding to cease. He wants anyone who is not able to read or comprehend phrases like *pre-seminal fluid*, *intercourse*, *copulation*, *coitus* or *coition* to simply go without any information at all. Better we risk the lives of many people than risk offending the morals of a few. After all, AIDS isn't about health promotion or disease prevention; it's one big moral lesson.

Now perhaps my sarcasm is getting a bit much (I've actually been accused of being sarcastic, you know), but this whole issue is so misguided that the only other group more ridiculous than Heppner and his band of subversive moralists is the media that went fleeing to AIDS Saskatoon and AIDS Regina in search of a story. The real story here is who supplies material to Heppner for which he can base

his complaints. The real story is how he actually got his hands on the 32 pamphlets that he, for the most part, found offensive. The real story is about how AIDS Saskatoon's more graphic pamphlets get plastered on light standards and telephone poles in Regina, or under the windshield wipers of cars in Saskatoon. But to pursue that story would require some work on the part of the media, and I'm beginning to think that the media in Saskatchewan are beyond such expectations.

The pamphlet that caused the most controversy was the "Safe S/M" pamphlet that's available in our front racks at the agency. A concise and thorough document, this pamphlet discusses all aspects of S/M (whipping, electric torture, piercing, sex toys, etc.) and how one can go about engaging in such behaviours free of risk of HIV infection. His contention that government funding shouldn't support such material is almost as misguided as Mr. Heppner himself. The material is provided to us free of charge and isn't produced in Saskatchewan (we get it from Toronto). No government money goes to support its production at all. His contention that the material is "distributed" is inflammatory. The material is here for those who want it, but his use of the phrase "distributed" infers that we mail them out to random households in the province at our own whim.

Above all else, the pamphlet contains a sexually-explicit warning on the cover. So you're easily offended; you read the warning; you open the pamphlet and become offended. Who's the idiot in that scenario? I guess Mr. Heppner should be thankful that the cover didn't have an explosives warning on the cover or it would have been more than his mouth that got shot off during this escapade.

So here we are, many days after the ramblings of one moralistic MLA bugger up my work day. The pamphlet is still on the racks in plain sight and accessible to those who need it. It's been here for nine years without so much as a single complaint from anyone. It is possible that we have the original shipment from 1988. Our funding remains in place and there doesn't seem to be an epidemic of young people accidentally electrocuting themselves while trying out electric torture for the first time. What really got accomplished, then? Well, Mr. Heppner got to strut himself in front of the cameras in spite of lacking any really political issues to pursue. (Life as the third party... Oh, how the mighty have fallen.) His constituents got to see their elected official slamming the good work of the community-based AIDS prevention movement, who responded to this epidemic long before the conservatives learned how to pronounce "AIDS." But ultimately, Mr. Heppner did nothing more than score cheap political points with some voters on the backs of those who have died from this disease. I hope he's proud of his efforts. While being such a defender of public money I wonder why we haven't heard him condemning the very party he is a member of? The same party who defrauded Saskatchewan tax payers out of hundreds of thousands of public dollars. Where's the morality in that, Mr. Heppner? 

Lately, I have been finding myself feeling extremely constricted and closeted. However, this feeling has nothing to do with my sexual orientation, but the secret I hide produces similar fear and anxiety to what I experienced as a closeted gay man. My freedom from the "sexual orientation" closet has given me hope and encouragement to abandon the closet that holds me now, the closet of "same-sex violence." I am a survivor of sexual assault, emotional and physical abuse, which has occurred periodically throughout my life at the hands of a variety of men, both heterosexual and gay. Each act of violence has perpetuated in me an unhealthy perception of men, a perception that unfortunately all men in my life, deserving or not, have paid a price for. A perception that has contributed to my systematic distancing of myself from others because I would rather be lonely than risk choosing an unhealthy partner.

When I decided to write this article, I felt that excluding the violence I experienced at the hands of heterosexual men would be an inaccurate way to examine same-sex violence. The mistrust or apprehension I feel towards men involves all men. My apprehension about men is not qualified along sexual orientation lines. Experiencing violence as a child by heterosexual men contributed to my sometimes blind acceptance of abuse by my male partners in adulthood. As a child, I received a clear message that violence was an acceptable way for men to behave and those who experienced the violence deserved what they got. It took me many years to realize that was not an acceptable way to behave but abuse occurs in more ways than just physical. Survivors of abusive relationships still come equipped with the "buttons/triggers" their abusers used to keep them in those abusive relationships. Without proper intervention to diffuse the effect of those "buttons/triggers," the vulnerability experienced by survivors will continue to affect the healthiness of their present relationships, both friendly and romantic. For many survivors, relationships eventually become difficult, emotionally-draining processes.

*For survivors,
disclosing their
experiences to
partners, new or
established, can
be extremely
frightening.*

For me, one of the most devastating experiences of violence was being sexually assaulted by a male partner. In that forced act he destroyed any trust I had towards men and shattered my belief in mutually respectful relationships. My perception of myself was also seriously damaged because I felt I could have done more to prevent the abuse from happening. I became the judge and jury, engaging in self-blaming behaviour, turning my hatred towards myself and everyone else except my abuser. Eventually, I realized that I did everything I could to keep myself as safe as possible in that given situation and I now understand that part of my self-loathing had to do with fear of persecution. I kept the secret because I was afraid that I would have to justify my actions during the sexual assault or that I would be forced to recount the events around the sexual assault so people could make their own judgment which could have resulted in further devaluing me.

When examining the issue of abusive relationships you cannot do an adequate assessment without considering the role of love. Often in abusive relationships the social concept defined as love is used to maintain the status quo or in attempt to provoke change. Statements like: "I hit you because I love you so much" and "If you loved me you would not hit me." Some people argue that abusive relationships are devoid of love. I believe that there is love in abusive relationships but neither partner has learned how to cultivate healthy love effectively. Both individuals in abusive relationships, somewhere in the socialization process, learned an inaccurate method of fostering and maintaining love. Abusive people have to learn constructive methods of interrelating that do not involved dominating and force. Survivors have to learn how to identify people who engage in healthy interrelating skills. I believe a common element both share is a lack of self-esteem and an understanding of one's own self-worth. When I realized that people who love you can do terrible things to you I finally started to trust in my own self-worth, that I have the right to walk away from men who

could not love in a healthy manner.

For survivors, disclosing their experiences to partners, new or established, can be an extremely frightening experience. How do you explain to a partner, who you know would never raise a hand to you, that the fear is still in the back of your mind without hurting him? How do you explain that your apparent lack of desire of sexual intimacy is because of the flashbacks you are having or that the vulnerability you experience sometimes in those moments of intimacy is too much to bear, again without hurting him or your relationship? Despite the fact that the abuse is over, the negative effect from those events still influences your life long after that relationship is over. I found myself desperately clinging to every relationship, yet at the same time expressing a fierce independence to my partner because I could not risk the vulnerability again. All of these examples just scratch the surface of the problems that occur for survivors and their partners. One can clearly observe that abusive relationships have far-reaching effects for many individuals in our society and that violence does not occur in a vacuum.

I do not want to give you the impression that all males in my life have been abusive because that is certainly not the case. I have had incredible family members, boyfriends and friends (straight and gay) who have had the patience to cultivate mutually respectful, trusting relationships with me. I realize that it takes a special person to understand how to interact in a constructive manner with someone who is a survivor of abuse. Individuals who interact with survivors have to have an intuitive ability to "read between the lines" and often

what the survivor is focusing on is not the real issue. For me, at the times I'm most vulnerable and the least sure about my relationships, I engage in excessive amounts of self-deprecating behaviour. Instead of focusing on the behaviour some people realize what I need during those times is closeness, respect and reassurance. Survivors have to be sensitive to the needs of their partners by taking the time to explain that "triggers/flashbacks" are residual effects of past abuse and those reactions do not reflect on the present relationship. Interacting with a survivor is a learning process in which both parties have to look beyond the immediate and trust in each other.

The gay and lesbian community is not immune to partner abuse, which occurs at an alarming rate. The lack of social support systems hinders the ability for same-sex couples to seek intervention. Same-sex assaults usually are unreported because victims perceive the judicial system as lacking understanding of lesbians and gays. Our community has to start advocating for social programs that cater to the special needs of individuals who have been assaulted by partners of the same sex. In Saskatoon, the local sexual assault centre, in cooperation with Gay & Lesbian Health Services, trained their volunteers in how to deal with people who have been sexual assaulted by a person of the same gender. However, still more work needs to be done to establish safehouses, educational programs for police and members of the judicial system, and advocating for government-funded proactive programs. We have to take responsibility for the safety of our community because our ability to achieve rights in society depends on the healthiness of the members of our community. [2]

PROTESTING HATE AD

(Saskatoon) Over 100 people demonstrated in front of the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix* July 3 to protest the running of an advertisement that they considered hateful. The picketers showed up at 1:00pm and marched in front of the newspaper's offices for 45 minutes. They carried signs reading "Gay Rights Are Human Rights," "God Loves Everyone" and "Hate Ad Equals Gay/Lesbian Bashing" and shouted slogans like "Hey, Hey, Ho, Ho, Homophobia's got to go."

The protesters were upset about an advertisement that had run in the June 30 issue of the paper. The ad, which was a full page wide and 11 cm high, listed four verses of scripture, Romans 1, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 in large bold red type on the left. Next to the scripture list was an equal sign and two stick figures holding hands with the universal sign for "no" superimposed over them. Beneath the graphic was a phone number in Regina where people could phone for the ad in bumper sticker form.

"The community is outraged by this hateful ad," said Gens Hellquist, executive director of Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS). "I've been fielding calls from outraged people, gay and non-gay, since it first appeared. They were calling me at home the morning the ad appeared wondering what they could do about it," Hellquist added.

AIDS Saskatoon also began getting calls from outraged readers the day the ad appeared. "It seems that all we did Monday and Tuesday was field calls about the ad," said Hellquist. "By the time two members of Out & Proud Youth came into my office on noon Wednesday to say four or five of the youth group had decided to picket the paper the next day, it was obvious that there was growing anger in the community about what the paper had printed." GLHS and AIDS Saskatoon decided to help out the youth group members by making calls back to those who had called about the ad and telling them about the protest.

"Our issue is not as much with the ad, but with the *Star Phoenix*'s decision to run the ad," said Jeff Dodds, executive director of AIDS Saskatoon. "We believe the ad promotes the eradication of a group of people, and we believe that that violates the spirit of the human rights code." Some of the biblical verses listed suggest that gay people should be put to death.

"I believe this could be a fundamentally important human rights case."

- Hellquist

While the ad gave no indication of who placed it other than the Regina phone number, it was soon discovered that the ad had been placed by Regina resident Hugh Owens. Owens is no stranger to the debate over gay and lesbian rights. When the provincial government amended human rights legislation to include protection on the basis of sexual orientation, Owens launched a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. He wanted the Commission to rule on his belief that the new human rights legislation made the Bible hate literature which would then force the government to once again permit discrimination against lesbians and gay men. The Commission refused to hear his complaint, saying the issue wasn't with the Bible but rather with some people's interpretation of that book.

Owens said he placed his ad in response to an announcement he had seen for Lesbian and Gay Pride Week in Saskatoon. "As a Christian, I felt I had to respond in some way," Owens said. He added that he wasn't promoting "gay bashing" but objecting to the sin of homosexuality.

The *Star Phoenix* issued a statement during

the protest. In it, publisher Lyle Sinkewicz said the paper "applies both the letter and the spirit of laws protecting certain groups of people from discrimination." However he added that those laws must be "viewed against the backdrop of the right to freedom of speech" and that was why they carried the ad. He suggested that the ad and responding demonstration was really a debate between two groups with different opinions. He added that in light of the "feedback from the community" they will not print any similar ads in the future.

It was later learned that the advertising department had held a meeting the Friday before the ad appeared to discuss the possible repercussions of running the ad. "This shows that the *Star Phoenix* knew the ad was hateful but decided to go for the advertising money instead of standing up to hate," said Hellquist.

That decision meant they had to inform Owens that they wouldn't print the second ad in his series which was slated to come out two days later. That ad had two female stick figures with the universal sign for "no" superimposed over them. Owens then filed a complaint with the human rights commission over the paper's refusal to run his second ad.

Hellquist said the issue is not a debate between two groups, but about the publication of hate literature. "It's time we made some decisions whether we're going to allow groups to propagate hate under the guise of freedom of expression or freedom of religion," he said.

Dodds said the paper would not have printed a similar ad with two silhouettes of Hassidic Jews or African-Canadians in place of the symbol of two men.

Many of the protesters were non-gays from the faith community who were upset over the use of the Bible to justify hate. University chaplain Colin Clay said he saw the ad as hate that took Biblical passages out of

(continued on next page...)

(...continued from previous page)

context. "The reason the *Star Phoenix* is being condemned or criticized is because this could be seen as an incitement to violence," he said, which could result in attacks on people perceived to be gay or lesbian.

Seventeen people have filed complaints with the Human Rights Commission, which has agreed to pursue them jointly. Some filed their complaint under protection on the grounds of freedom of religion. "I believe the provisions protecting on the basis of religion must also include freedom from religion," said Hellquist. "I am tired of those ayatollahs of hate who want to use their religious beliefs to bash me, my family, my friends and my community and create a climate of hate and intolerance that has such a drastic impact on people."

The decision to print the ad was ultimately a costly one for the *Star Phoenix*. Dodds said he is aware of at least \$50,000 in advertising contracts that have been cancelled because of the ad as well as dozens of people who have cancelled subscriptions.

"I believe this could be a fundamentally important human rights case," said Hellquist. "Our society has come to the conclusion that the public media can not be used to incite hatred against Jews, First Nations people or those with a skin colour other than white. It's way past time our society made that same decision about lesbians and gay men."

Hellquist said he was pleased by the response to the ad. "It clearly shows that a broad cross-section of society believes the hate and intolerance directed at gay people must end. I just wish people would get as outraged about the many constant subtle forms of hate that are present everyday and that have such an impact on the health of anyone whose sexuality is different from the mainstream."

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

THE SASKATCHEWAN HUMAN RIGHTS HEARING INTO THE CASE
AGAINST *THE STAR PHOENIX* AND HUGH OWENS

(Saskatoon) Hugh Owens is a large man, with graying hair and a paunch of some substance which, nevertheless, he carries well. He's soft-spoken and polite, so that the elaborate tattoo which occasionally shows on his forearm comes as a bit of a surprise. More surprising, in fact shocking, is the contrast between his benign manner and the savagery of his religious views.

These views emerged very clearly during an independent hearing before an adjudicator in Saskatoon, 23rd to 31st August, 1999. Owens is the man who placed an ad in *The StarPhoenix* two years ago. It showed four biblical texts, an equals sign, and two male figures holding hands in a circle struck through with a diagonal line—the universal symbol of prohibition—and it mentioned that this message was also available in bumper-sticker form.

The texts, in case you need to look them up, are not very friendly to anyone committing a homosexual act: death is the required penalty.

Reaction to the ad was immediate. A crowd of more than seventy-five protesters demonstrated outside the offices of *The StarPhoenix*, and then Gens Hellquist, Jeff Dodds, and Jason Roy lodged complaints with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. They claimed the ad violated section 14(1) of the provincial human rights code because it tended to "deprive, abridge or otherwise restrict" their rights, also that it tended (to paraphrase the code) to expose them to hatred, ridicule, belittlement, and affronted their dignity. The objects of the complaint were two: *The StarPhoenix* and Hugh Owens. The Commission said that the complainants probably had cause, so the whole business went to this independent hearing.

Sitting in a large room amidst the fading glory of the Bessborough Hotel for more

than a week, and listening to the various participants talking often for hours at a time, was a strange experience. There was an air of formality and civilized restraint and, of course, a necessary regard for the technical legal aspects of the

*The priest trotted
out the familiar
Roman Catholic
line to the effect
that it was all
right to be
homosexual but
not to practise it.*

case—theory rather than human reality. It was difficult, at times, to remember that what they were talking about was something that affected my life directly and powerfully and painfully.

The lawyers and witnesses, facing adjudicator Valerie Watson, had their backs to us, and often spoke softly. The audience (not a very large one usually) sometimes had to strain to hear. I sat near the front, and behind me were a group of PFLAG mothers, several lesbians, and the occasional sympathetic drop-in. In an effort to cheer myself up, I dubbed this the Bride's side. The groom's side was notable for the absence, most of the time, of supporters, although towards the end a prominent member of R.E.A.L. Women attended, presumably to lend moral strength to Owens's cause. The reporters usually sat on that side, too.

Memorable moments during the testimony. Jason recounting how many times

he had been the victim of gay-bashing. Gens explaining how the climate of hate produces very real effects, such as alcoholism, depression, and suicide. Most moving of all, was the testimony of the mother of a gay son. In vivid detail she recounted a whole personal family history: the misery that her son endured in school, the strains it caused among her family, how it became impossible to remain in the small town where they lived, and, even now, her fears for her son economically, physically, and spiritually. She also told us of the many wholesome things that the experience produced: a deeper understanding of life, the discovery of amazing new friends, the strength that such a trial brings. As she returned to her seat behind me, I heard one of the other mothers say, "Thank you for speaking for us."

The Rev. Hawkes from Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto and the Rev. Canon Collin Clay of the University of Saskatchewan gave us a fascinating insight into the ins and outs of biblical interpretation. There was no absolutely fixed text, they explained, and certainly no absolutely fixed interpretation. In fact, it was doubtful if the texts that Owens and other homophobes were so fond of using were really about homosexuality in the modern sense at all. For one thing, there were often many different versions of the original texts from which the present bible was assembled, and these often differed from one another. For another, translation of a particular word was often problematic—with nothing to compare it to, you just had to guess what it meant. Finally, it was obvious to anyone who studied religious history that the way the bible was interpreted often depended on the preoccupations of a particular society at that point in time. (The current fixation on same-sex sex, for instance, would have been puzzling to someone in 16th century

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

England). In case Owens had not grasped this point, it was reinforced by the Rev. Buck of the Lutheran College at the University of Saskatchewan. Although he was a *StarPhoenix* witness, he also pointed to the instability of the biblical texts, and went on to give a stirring appeal for tolerance and for the Christian imperative to practice, and preach, love not hate.

These were in stark contrast to the Rabbi and the Roman Catholic priest also called by *The StarPhoenix*. The Rabbi stressed the right-wing, Orthodox position on homosexuality, and the priest trotted out the familiar Roman Catholic line to the effect that it was all right to be homosexual but not to practice it—what is known as You Can Have Wings But You Mustn't Fly doctrine. There was no instability-of-the-text nonsense for them. The "word of God" was clear: no same-sex sex.

Delightful moments during the testimony. Darien Moore, the Commission's lawyer, cross-examining Lyle Sinkewicz, the publisher of *The StarPhoenix*. He had given a rousing defence of free speech. It was essential for the media, and for society, he insisted, to be free to express controversial ideas. OK, said Ms. Moore, then if he believed so passionately in this principle, why did he refuse to print Owens's second ad? Touché. Even better, Ms. Moore described a hypothetical ad containing the image of an aboriginal person within the struck circle. Would he print such an image? No, replied Mr. Sinkewicz. And why not? Because it was obviously expressing hatred, he replied. You could almost hear *The StarPhoenix* lawyer groan.

The darkest moment. Hugh Owens giving his testimony. His only motive in placing the ad, he said, was to warn homosexuals of their impending doom, and he did it out of love for them. He spent most of his time expounding biblical texts. It was if he had not heard the previous testimony about the unreliability of exactly those texts he was using, because for him there was one meaning and one meaning only. He spent one entire morning going through verse after verse, almost all of them ending with the same

refrain: the punishment for homosexual acts was death. As you heard his voice droning on and on, making the same point over and over again, a sort of numbing tedium set in. His listeners became restless, they yawned, they looked at their watches. Through all the boredom, you had to keep reminding yourself that what this man was talking about was the judicial murder of homosexual people who put their desires into practice. It was not just theory for him. God has made His will plain, he said, it was not an option, not a suggestion, it was a commandment that homosexual acts should be punished by death, to be carried out by the legal authorities. (Mind you, this was also true for adulterers, and several other categories of sinners. At least he was consistent. But it was obvious that all he was really interested in was queers.) Reporters took notes casually.

It was too much for Gens Hellquist. After the fourth or fifth condemnation to death, he had to get up and walk out of the room. After all, his work with the Gay and Lesbian Health Services put him in a unique position to see the havoc caused by hatemongers like Owens. At times during the hearing, he told me, he could not help feeling angry at the whole, elaborate process. "I keep thinking," he said, "of all the people who lead wrecked lives and have even killed themselves as a result of the kind of shit put out by Owens."

Finally, the hearing was over. All the witnesses had given their testimony and had been cross-examined. The lawyers and Hugh Owens had made their closing statements. It was now up to the adjudica-

tor, who said she hoped to give a decision "within a month." Mr. Owens shook hands affably and prepared to return to Regina, where, appropriately enough, he works as a Corrections Officer.

The Bessborough hotel is built to resemble a French chateau. From the windows of the room where the hearing was held you could see the formal garden that runs down to the river. Just after the hearing was over, I stood looking out of the window. The river sparkled in the sun, and its tree-lined banks were a rich green because of the unusually rainy summer. For a moment you could imagine yourself beside the Loire, or some equally idyllic spot. What on earth is it, I wondered, that gets into the heart of an otherwise decent man like Hugh Owens, and drives him to such a dark and savage state of mind? And how odd that the bible, often referred to as "The Good Book" should be used to generate such intense hatred.

The scene seemed to darken. But then I recalled the heartening events of the hearing: the mothers, so strong and determined, the integrity of the clergy who spoke for the Commission, the courage of Gens, and Jeff, and Jason, and, above all, the very fact that the hearing could take place at all. It is not so long ago that sexual orientation was added to the protected grounds under the provincial code, and that came about because of a long and determined struggle on the part of individuals in our community. We have made wonderful progress. Now we must keep fighting so as not to lose it. The sun came back.

AN AFFRONT TO DIGNITY

(Saskatoon) After nearly two years of deliberation, a Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission board of inquiry ruled June 18 that the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* and Hugh Owens discriminated against gay men with an anti-gay ad that ran in the paper June 30, 1977. The offending ad was paid for by Hugh Owens, a Regina man.

The 1/5-page ad listed four Bible passages that are regularly used to condemn homosexuality. Beside the four passages was the 'equal' sign and the universal sign for 'no', a circle with a slash through it, superimposed over two male stick figures holding hands. The ad also offered to sell readers bumper stickers with the same design as the ad. Owens said he paid to have the ad run in the paper as a response to Lesbian and Gay Pride Week in Saskatoon.

The ad's appearance in the *StarPhoenix* sparked an immediate showing of outrage. Nearly a hundred people picketed the paper's office to express their disgust with the ad. Seventeen individuals filed a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission over the ad. It was agreed that all the complaints would be carried forward by Jeff Dodds, Jason Roy and Gens Hellquist.

In her ruling, lawyer Valerie Watson, who chaired the Board of Inquiry, said that the universal 'no' sign superimposed over two stick figures may not alone communicate hatred. "However, when combined with the passages from the Bible, the Board finds that the advertisement would expose or tend to expose homosexuals to hatred or ridicule, or may otherwise affront their dignity on the basis of their sexual orientation."

Watson also said she believed that Owens believed he was simply expressing his religious beliefs, but Human Rights Legislation places a reasonable restriction on his right to freedom of expression by prohibiting such material.

Watson also ordered the *StarPhoenix* and Owens to pay damages of \$1,500 to each of the complainants. She also prohibited Owens from "further publishing or displaying the bumper stickers submitted in evidence in a newspaper or any other medium." She also prohibited the

"It seems somehow appropriate that the ruling would be issued on the first day of Lesbian and Gay Pride Week in Saskatoon."

-Gens Hellquist

StarPhoenix from printing the ad in any future publication.

Gens Hellquist said he was ecstatic over the decision. "It also seems somehow appropriate that the ruling would be issued on the first day of Lesbian and Gay Pride Week in Saskatoon," he added. "Owens wanted to rain on our parade in 1997 when he put that offensive ad in the paper during Pride Week. This decision provides some sunshine as well as setting boundaries over what is fair public comment about lesbians and gay men," Hellquist said.

"I support Owens' rights to hold his religious beliefs when they relate to his life," Hellquist said. "However, I don't think he has the right to use those religious beliefs to sustain a climate of hate and homophobia. I shouldn't have to open my morning paper to see a huge ad saying I should be put to death."

StarPhoenix publisher Lyle Sinkewicz said he was not surprised by the ruling. "Given the history of human rights commission rulings in Saskatchewan, we ex-

pected it," he said. "What we did find surprising was the unconscionable delay in getting a ruling from board of inquiry chair Valerie Watson. It was quite frankly appalling that we had to wait for nearly two years."

Eleven days after the ruling the *StarPhoenix*'s lawyers notified the Human Rights Commission that they would not appeal the decision. However, on July 11, Hugh Owens filed notice to Appeal in the Court of Queen's Bench.

In his notice of appeal Owens claimed that the tribunal erred in numerous ways, including "when it failed to consider the parameters of this status known as 'sexual orientation.' In failing to determine whether it is considered an immutable status akin to race, colour, and ethnicity, or a willful and chosen behaviour, and if both, under what circumstances?"

Owens, who will represent himself during the appeal, also claimed the ruling ignored his right to denounce sin, and share the Bible's message concerning the practice of homosexuality.

"I'm not terribly worried about the appeal," said Hellquist. "Mr. Owens has been trying for a number of years to find a court somewhere who'll rule that the Bible is hate literature. What he doesn't seem to comprehend is it isn't the book, it's how people like him interpret religious writings in hateful ways that have negative impacts on the lives of real people. With his logic, most any heinous action can be justified by interpreting the Bible, Koran or Torah in a narrow and selective way."

A BIT EASIER... FOR SOME

(Medicine Hat) Jeremy Crittenden, an 18-year-old gay man, says he is not about to let his attackers get away after he was assaulted and knocked unconscious at a house party. Crittenden says he was attacked after two teens called him a "fag-got" and asked if he was gay. The next thing he remembers is waking up in the hospital with a metal plate in his mouth to repair his broken jaw.

Witnesses say Crittenden was attacked by as many as five men who later ran off. Police are searching for two suspects between 16 and 18 years.

Ryan Pattison, a student at Medicine Hat College, says attitudes must change in wake of the bashing. Pattison, who organized a gay youth group at the college, said other people at the party may not have gone to Crittenden's aid because they were afraid of being labelled gay themselves. Pattison is also worried that the attack may deter other gay youth in Medicine Hat from coming out.

"Medicine Hat is very closed minded," Pattison said. "At the same time, I think it was one of those random acts and I don't think everyone in Medicine Hat has that mentality." Pattison also said that members of his youth group communicate by e-mail, and don't meet in person as a group because members are afraid.

Donnie White, a gay man who has lived in Medicine Hat for 20 years, said he thought being gay in his city had become easier, but the bashing on Crittenden shows that things haven't changed all that much.

"There are more people who are better educated on gay issues," White said, "but there are still no clubs or places for gay people to meet."

"WASTING" TAXPAYERS' MONEY

(Saskatoon) Last May, when Garry Varro staged his Queer City Cinema festival in Regina, the issue of government funding was brought up in the Saskatchewan legislature. MLAs from the Saskatchewan Party rose in the legislature to complain that taxpayers' money was being spent on pornography. MLA June Draude objected to the use of "public money" to fund "pornography" and complained about the festival being staged in the Regina Public Library "right beside the children's library."

On the opening and closing nights of the Regina festival a small group calling themselves the Christian Truth Activists demonstrated in front of the library carrying signs such as "Gay Activists Expect Taxpayers to Fund Their Porn Addiction."

Varro was undaunted and this winter took his festival on the road to Saskatoon where it was shown at the Mendel Art Gallery in co-operation with Video Vérité. Before the All Queer, All Canadian, All Night Long 2001 Tour opened in Saskatoon on Feb 8 to 10, its appearance came under attack from Saskatoon-Humboldt Alliance MP Jim Pankiw. Pankiw rose in the House of Commons February 7 to complain that the \$20,000 Canada Council grant given to the festival was a waste of tax money.

Pankiw, who has in the past attacked affirmative action programs for Aborigines at the University of Saskatchewan, told the Commons, "Starting tomorrow, the city of Saskatoon will be witness to another flagrant and irresponsible waste of taxpayers' money by the Liberal government. In this instance the amount is \$20,000, small potatoes compared to last year's scandalous misuse of billions by the Liberal government's human resources minister, but wasteful spending nonetheless. I am referring to the federal government's cash handout of \$20,000 to the Queer City Cinema Film Festival, notorious for playing such films as the one about lesbian bikers who use chil-

dren as sex slaves."

Pankiw went on to state, "Taxpayers may not know which is more peculiar, the strange misuse of taxpayers' money in this instance or the Queer City Cinema Film Festival itself. One thing they do

"Taxpayers may not know which is more peculiar, the strange misuse of taxpayers' money in this instance or the Queer City Cinema Film Festival itself."

—Jim Pankiw, M.P.
Saskatoon-Humboldt

know is that both are somewhat at odds with, much less appreciated, by hardworking families who pay taxes to the federal government expecting that their money will not be wasted."

Pankiw has been strangely silent about the nearly \$800,000 that Alberta taxpayers have had to pay to settle a frivolous lawsuit against Alliance leader Stockwell Day. Pankiw also suggested that an Alliance government would establish mechanisms to review all grants made by arms-length agencies, such as the Canada Council, to ensure taxpayers money is going to things he and his party approve of.

Pankiw was not the only person to protest the Saskatoon staging of the queer cinema festival. The Christian Truth Activists, always ready to weigh in against the perils of homosexuals, slammed the festival. Member Dianne Richardson, who acknowledged she hadn't seen any of the films or videos, said she thinks they undermine society and traditional families. "Certainly it's an affront to our faith," she added.

It was a cold winter night when the festival opened in Saskatoon but over 100 people showed up to demonstrate in front of the Mendel Art Gallery. Most of the demonstrators were there to support to festival and denounce Pankiw for his homophobic views. A half dozen demonstrators from the Christian Truth Activists travelled up from Regina to demonstrate against the festival but they were drowned out by those supporting the festival.

The radical Christian group distributed pamphlets claiming the films depicted scenes of bondage, necrophilia and "the violent raping of children." Those claims were denied by Varro as were Pankiw's claims that the films depicted child sex slaves. Three of the more than 45 films and videos were part of a session on pornography, Varro said. The rest of the works dealt with various aspects of life, such as relationships gone sour, living solo and "other daily struggles of life," Varro added.

In spite of the fuss, the Saskatoon festival was a success. The festival moved on to Winnipeg the following week.

CUSTOMS STRIKES AGAIN

(Saskatoon) *The XY Survival Guide: Everything You Wanted To Know About Being Young & Gay* is finally available at Out of the Closet boutique at Gay & Lesbian Health Services.

Out of the Closet placed an order for this excellent book by author Benjie Nycum through XY's head office in San Francisco in early December, 2000. After seven weeks they contacted XY to inquire as to the status of the shipment and were baffled to find that the order had been sent immediately after the order was placed. Even with the Christmas mail rush, it should have arrived. A second shipment was sent through the warehouse in New Jersey, and XY and GLHS went to work to find the whereabouts of the first shipment.

The first shipment finally showed up and GLHS learned it had been seized by Canada Customs at the border. "What arrived was a somewhat distressed box, via Canada Post. Over a quarter of the Customs Postal Import Form was simply missing, making it impossible to find out why it had been seized. The box was opened from the bottom as not to damage what was left of the Customs form," said Kirby Bell of GLHS.

"After removing all the books to look at them, one was found with the cover slashed. There was also a note from author Nycum in an envelope that was opened for 'inspection,'" said Bell. "It took two days of phoning four provinces to finally get an answer from a Customs official in Calgary." Bell received a faxed copy of the E14 form stating that this educational book was under scrutiny as a porn publication. The form letter also stated that there was no damage to the contents.

"Outrage was my first feeling, after knowing that the Supreme Court of Canada finally ruled in favor of Little Sister's Bookstore, citing that Canada Customs conducted a 15-year campaign of harassment against the bookstore," said Bell. "I find it amazing that Customs Inspector #11925 had the time and inclination to not even notice in his/her zeal that they damaged a book and the note was just a thank you."

The second shipment of books arrived through Winnipeg's Customs office. That shipment

only took a total of seven days from the time it was shipped, went through Customs and was delivered by Canada Post. "Only one province separates these two entry points but what a difference," said Bell. "We also found out that the books come in bundles of 10. It was somewhat comforting to know that someone has all the time in the world to go through 14 copies of the same book looking for *porn*," Bell added.

"It is time that legislation is passed so an end will come to one person being able to take and apply their morality to work with them and abuse the power which they have," Bell said.

THE COST OF HOMOPHOBIA

(Saskatoon) Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) has released their study on the economic costs of homophobia. The study, which was funded by the Community-University Institute for Social Research, was conducted by Christopher Banks, a researcher working with Rochon Associated Human Resource Management Consulting, Inc.

"We've been looking for the means to conduct this research for some time," said Gens Hellquist, executive director of GLHS. "We've been telling funders and policy people for some time that homophobia is killing people but I get the sense they don't care. We thought that perhaps if they had some idea of the economic toll that homophobia has on our health care and economic system they might be more inclined to begin addressing the issues. Unfortunately, money still talks in our society."

The study was a literature review synthesizing those studies that illuminate the high rates of health issues in the gay and lesbian community with those studies that look at the economic impact of various health issues. As there has been a lack of quality research on gay issues, Banks was only able to address five areas: suicide, smoking, alcohol abuse, illicit drug use, and depression. Even with just those five areas, the cost can be as high as \$8 billion a year in Canada.

The studies used a base rate of 5% and 10% as the percent of the population that is gay, lesbian or bisexual, or likely to be most impacted by homophobia. From that a cost factor was deduced using studies on the economic cost of a specific health issue.

The figures for suicide, which is three times higher in the queer community, range from \$695 to \$823 million; smoking, which is twice the rate in the queer community, ranges from \$281 to \$623 million; alcohol abuse ranges from \$0.29 to \$4.1 billion; illicit drug use ranges from \$119 to \$221 million; and depression from \$0.54 to \$2.3 billion. The totals therefore range from \$2.225 billion to \$8.067 billion. For a province like

Saskatchewan, which has 3% of Canada's population, the figures range from \$67 million to \$242 million.

"There are numerous areas where sufficient reliable research doesn't exist that an economic cost couldn't be arrived at," said Hellquist. "These include unemployment, violence and HIV/AIDS. Other areas, like increased use of social assistance and incarceration/conflict with the criminal justice system, have had no research conducted even though we know from our experience at GLHS that these are major issues," Hellquist added.

"We certainly believe that much more research is needed in these areas," said Hellquist. "But we also know the cost in human lives and dollars is high enough to justify sustained action on the part of all levels of our society."

The study can be obtained from GLHS by calling them at 306-665-1224 (they would appreciate a donation for postage) or it will soon be online at their web site <http://gaycanada.com/glhs/>.

EDITORIAL

Like most others in the world I was shocked by the events in New York City on September 11, 2001. I walked around for days trying to comprehend how someone could perpetuate such a heinous act in the name of their God. Unfortunately, religious fundamentalism has been causing death and terror in our world for millenia.

Those who commit terror in the name of Allah are really no different than those who commit terror in the name of the Christian God. There is certainly a difference in how that terrorism is perpetuated but the end result is always the death of innocent people.

Religious terrorism has been a part of my life, and the lives of all queer people for the last two or three hundred years. In the early days of America lesbians were labeled witches and burned at the stake. Gay men died in prisons for "the love that dare not speak its name."

In the 21st Century queer people still suffer the wrath of religious terrorists. The names of those terrorists are well known: Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Lou Sheldon, Fred Phelps and, closer to home, Bill Whatcott and Hugh Owens. They believe their interpretation of religious writings grants them the right to create climates that result in the deaths of countless people.

Now the above named haven't killed 6,000 people in a single act of madness. However, I believe they are responsible for the deaths of thousands of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people in North America. The difference is the deaths they cause are more subtle and silently take place in communities across the continent every day of the year.

Each year over 1,000 queer people kill themselves in Canada because they do not believe they can survive in the climate of hate and homophobia that exists. It's safe to say that in the United States, with a population ten times Canada, that there are probably in excess of 10,000 queer people who kill themselves each year because of the hate perpetuated by religious terrorists. Thousands more of our tribe die premature deaths because they feel the need to abuse drugs and alcohol to numb the hate and pain stirred up by religious fundamentalists. More yet die from AIDS because they did not feel valued enough to take precautions that would save their life.

Those thousands of deaths do not occur in a single act of madness but rather occur silently every day of every year. Religious fundamentalism in North America is most certainly complicit in the deaths of so many of our tribe.

When we speak out against religious fundamentalism and terrorism committed in the name of Allah we must also speak out as loudly against religious fundamentalism and terrorism committed in the name of the Christian God. To not do so would be hypocritical.

The Bill Whatcott Story

NEWS

PRAIRIES

At It Again

(Saskatoon) Bill Whatcott and his group, the Christian Truth Activists, have once again distributed anti-gay literature throughout Saskatoon. On January 11, 2002 Whatcott and his band of Christians dropped pamphlets in 5,000 homes in the city. The material included a photocopy of an AIDS Saskatoon pamphlet on "Safer Sex Guidelines for Gay Men" as well as a flyer encouraging people to call the Premier and Leader of the Opposition to protest the funding that goes to Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS).

In e-mails Whatcott sent out to his distribution list, he gloats about having sent a spy up to collect literature distributed by the group. He also complains about a human rights complaint that has been filed against him for a pamphlet he distributed last year. "While Gens (Hellquist) right now is probably reveling in thoughts of getting me fined, thrown in jail and generally shut up, little does he know that by this time next January he may be fighting just to keep himself employed at the government trough," Whatcott states in one of his messages.

Whatcott feigns outrage over the use of street language in the pamphlet his spy obtained from GLHS. The pamphlet uses the word 'fucking' on three occasions and uses street language when discussing safe sex practices. "Using swear words to encourage sodomites to use condoms will not reduce the spread of HIV; only a change in one's morality and behaviour

will stop the spread of this communicable and mostly lifestyle acquired disease," he states in his flyer that was distributed in Saskatoon.

In his flyer he also sounds the alarm over GLHS's Safer School Project which is working to have issues of homophobia

*"Methinks the
lady doth protest
too much!"*

**-Gens Hellquist
Executive Director, GLHS**

addressed in the education system. "Promoting homosexuality has everything to do with introducing children to a destructive and immoral lifestyle and ensuring that more children accept it as normal, thereby putting more children at risk of experimentation with it," the flyer states. The flyer also lists "Facts on Homosexuality" which include the outrageous claim "that only 2% of sodomite males in a 1981 study were monogamous and that 28% admitted to sodomizing more than one thousand different men over the course of their lifetime."

"Methinks the lady doth protest too much," said Gens Hellquist, executive director of GLHS. "It's increasingly clear that Whatcott is a man who is unable to accept his own gay feelings. He confided

to a *StarPhoenix* reporter that he had engaged in sexual acts with men when he was younger. Unfortunately, his behaviour is destructive for many young people who are struggling with their own gay or lesbian feelings."

Whatcott was hoping to cause an uproar over GLHS receiving government funding, but the opposite seems to have occurred. GLHS and AIDS Saskatoon received a number of calls from individuals outraged about his antics. One woman quoted in the *StarPhoenix* complained about her 7-year-old daughter finding the pamphlet and her anger was directed towards Whatcott. "We have received copies of e-mails and letters sent to the Premier in response to Whatcott's actions," Hellquist said. "All of those letters and e-mails have called for more funding for GLHS and used Whatcott's material as a reason why GLHS is important. One woman was so outraged she even sent us a donation of \$100, saying it was obvious that GLHS was needed."

Whatcott isn't likely to end his actions soon even though he has been fined for his anti-gay and anti-abortion actions in the past. His e-mail list includes a who's who of the radical anti-abortion movement in North America, including those who justify the killing of doctors who perform abortions. Whatcott, who's a licensed practical nurse with the Regina health district, faced censure from his

professional organization when they unsuccessfully tried to have his licence removed.

Not happy with the reaction he got from his Saskatoon pamphlet distribution, he repeated it in Regina on January 21 with the distribution of 2,000 pamphlets in that city. A similar backlash against Whatcott took place there as well.

"We've long known that some of our more vicious enemies are those with unresolved issues of their own sexual orientation," Hellquist said. While Whatcott appears to have helped demonstrate the levels of homophobia that are still tolerated in our society, I also have to worry about any young people struggling with their own orientation seeing Whatcott's obsessive and hateful rants," Hellquist said. "He's also nuts about guns and his right to own them, so one should be wary of the man."

THE TRUTH ABOUT HATRED

OR HOW TO SUPPRESS YOUR HOMOSEXUALITY

by Jeff Dodds

Recently in Saskatchewan, a certain Bill Whatcott has been delivering pamphlets about safe gay sex, created by a local AIDS organization, to select households in Regina and Saskatoon. All for the purpose of raising public ire toward governments who financially support such efforts. Whatcott's position is that homosexuality itself is wrong and therefore efforts to support gays is equally wrong. His contention goes further to suggest that public money shouldn't support gay issues, although he appears fine accepting the tax support his services receive from gays and lesbians.

While I didn't have the pleasure of fighting Whatcott, there was Hugh Owens before him, also from Regina, against whom I had the pleasure of filing a human rights complaint after he placed an ad in the Saskatoon paper equating homosexuality with biblical phrases suggesting we be put to death. Previously, while living in Calgary, I also had occasion to quarrel publicly with Ted and Link Byfield, owners of the right-wing *Alberta Report* magazine. They, too, spent much time condemning homosexuals and trying to raise the fears of Albertans that the gay agenda would wipe out the cherished heterosexual family unit.

I worry a great deal about people who seem consumed by the need to condemn homosexuality. When I was dealing with the Byfields in the eighties, my worry was about how their comments would affect my community. I wondered about the young gays and lesbians who might be exposed to such hatred and how they might internalize these feelings. I worried about how such rhetoric might manifest itself into acts of physical violence towards gays and lesbians by those who read the magazine. And, I worried about politicians who might perceive their diatribes as representative of the population and slow efforts to change legislation supporting gays and lesbians. I had much the same reaction to Owens when he placed his ad in the *StarPhoenix*, compounded by my anger toward the paper for their decision to run such obvious hatred.

The latest actions of Whatcott, however, have caused me to ponder even further and now I find myself worrying about a whole new set of issues. Perhaps I'm getting mellow with age, but now I actually find myself worrying about the very people I used to fear.

Now I know that you might want to roll your eyes about feeling anything for people who attack us with acts of hatred, but I do think that they warrant a certain amount of pity. Imagine your life consumed by such obsessive hatred, trying to stop a human behaviour that has existed since recorded time. You have to think that these people don't sleep too well, crawling into bed each night knowing that at that very moment, men and women around

the globe are having gratifying and pleasurable sex with members of the same gender. I wonder what quality of life one can have when all a person does is attack others. That has to be stressful.

And really, when you think about it, what is it that they want to achieve? Apparently, their hope is to eradicate homosexuality. But how do you do that from your kitchen in Regina, or your magazine publishing house in Edmonton? Really, is it the expectation of these people that the entire free world will rethink its ever-increasing acceptance of homosexuality because they said so? Talk about insurmountable odds.

Only a short while ago we were still fighting some hysterical suggestions of what would happen if gays and lesbians were allowed to live freely and openly in our society. You might recall that we were going to convert all children into a life of homosexuality, straight people would be forced to have gay sex without consent because it would be "normal," gays and lesbians would take over governments and outlaw polyester, families would become non-existent, and the world would come to a crushing end, à la Sodom and Gomorrah. Much of the public's attitude toward homosexuality has shifted as a result of these hysterical suggestions (not unlike the ones espoused now) because people know better; we defied the rhetoric and prevailed because the fundamental premise of hatred is illogical.

So when you look at this situation with some pity and some logic, it would appear to me that the rationale for such hatred can't be external, because the impact that their actions will have are truly limited given the lofty goal of changing public attitudes. Indeed, as we've witnessed with Whatcott, and others, such open hostility toward gays and lesbians actually has the opposite effect; public support becomes galvanized in our favour when you attack us, not the opposite.

I recall a CBC interview I did with Link Byfield of the *Alberta Report*. Throughout most of the five minute discussion, the phrase "anal sex" was uttered consistently by Mr. Byfield. To the average listener it became apparent that perhaps Mr. Byfield had something of an obsession with other people's anuses — and what they chose to do with them — not particularly germane to a discussion around equal human rights. I feel confident in suggesting that anal sex didn't cease as a result of that interview, among gay men or anyone else for that matter.

So if their anger and hatred really doesn't have the capacity to change things externally, one has to surmise that the gratification purveyors of hate receive is strictly internal. My logic isn't without some rationale. Studies have shown us that one out of

every three gay bashers is actually a repressed homosexual, so filled with self-loathing that they strike out against those who force them to confront their own reality. It is a vicious cycle for these individuals who engage in violence against the very people they are, deeply ingraining their own sense of self-hatred. After all, if you can get the society at large to condemn homosexuality, you can have an easier time condemning it in yourself.

In earlier times, before Will and Grace, and even before Liberace, gays and lesbians had a difficult time expressing their love and living healthy lives. That's not to say that some didn't succeed — many did — but a greater number of people suppressed their true selves in order to conform to the demands of the dominant culture, often with tragic results. Those days are largely gone and the efforts of the occasional homophobic zealot won't reverse that. So far, they've only managed to make it generally better for us, despite what individual pain they might inflict.

In spite of the zealots, my life goes on, but with a sense of sympathy for those who obviously have some personal issues they need to resolve. There will come a time in the lives of these individuals who spread hatred when they realize that all of their venomous rhetoric was meaningless and changed nothing. They will have spent a lifetime with anger and hate and fear consuming them. They are truly worthy of pity, and at the end of their days on earth, they will realize the magnitude of their failure. ¶

THE FACE OF HATE

(Saskatoon) Bill Whatcott and his Christian Truth Activists continue to terrorize gays and lesbians in Saskatchewan. On March 15, Whatcott and two other individuals picketed the Breaking The Silence conference where people had come to learn of ways to create safer environments for lesbians and gays in the education system. As usual, the term "Sodomite" featured prominently in the picket signs he carried.

Whatcott also took it upon himself to distribute 2,500 flyers in the University area of Saskatoon warning about "Sodomites in our Public Schools." In his pamphlet, Whatcott makes the ludicrous claim that "Sodomites are 3 times more likely to sexually abuse children" and "430 times more likely to acquire AIDS." Never one to be concerned about statistics and facts, Whatcott's claim regarding AIDS would mean that there must be 8.6million gay men in Canada with AIDS as the statistics from Health Canada indicate there are approximately 20,000 heterosexuals with HIV or AIDS.

This most recent flyer caused more of an uproar than previous attempts by Whatcott, with over 100 complaints being filed with Saskatoon police over the flyer. Marie Green was one of those lodging complaints. "He's targeting gay teachers... This is hate literature and nobody has the right to distribute it, certainly not in my home," Green said. "I didn't see the person who distributed it and I'm sorry I didn't, because I would have had something to say to them."

Saskatoon police said they were unable to file any charges against Whatcott because he seems to walk the line and also because Canada's hate crimes laws do not include protection for gays and lesbians.

Whatcott admits that he received a number of e-mails and phone calls protesting his actions, saying that's "nothing new." "You can shut me up, you can even throw me in jail, you can fine me, but you cannot shut

down ideas and you certainly cannot shut down the truth and the truth is that the Bible teaches this is a sin, it's wrong to promote homosexual practices."

Whatcott seems to have found friends in the United States who are supporting his

"I have had more than one gay person in my office in tears over the level of hate that this man exhibits and propagates."

**-Gens Hellquist
Executive Director, GLHS**

attacks against gays and lesbians in the province. In one of his e-mails sent to his e-mail list he thanks Pastor Ovadal from Wisconsin Christians United. "He almost single handily (*sic*) raised enough money for our 12,000 flyers that will be distributed in Regina for our 2nd annual Heterosexual Family Pride Day. We are very excited about these flyers, much truth and gospel will be hitting Regina's mailboxes over the next two months."

Originally, Whatcott's efforts seemed aimed at getting the provincial funding for Gay & Lesbian Health Services cut, but now he's turned his attention to *Perceptions*. In early April he distributed 2,000 flyers in Regina suggesting that a prairie queer publication was a paedophile publication. "We also had to make an emergency 2,000 additional flyers to expose paedophilia in our prairie sodomite magazine," he said in an e-mail. "This magazine has a 35,000 circulation in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta. It has some pretty respectable advertisers. At any rate this is the ad I uncovered; it was lumped in with other personal ads of sodomite men advertising themselves for "bottom sex," drag & fantasy." The classified personal ad he was referring to was "Searching for boys/men for penpals,

friendships, exchanging video, pics, magazines & anything more." In his flyer he stated, "The ads with men advertising as bottoms are men who want to get sodomized. This shouldn't be legal in Saskatchewan!"

"While we might want to see Whatcott as a pathetic closet case, I think we ignore his actions at our peril," said Gens Hellquist. "I have had more than one gay person in my office in tears over the level of hate that this man exhibits and propagates. That shouldn't be legal in Saskatchewan or Canada. I worry about a young person who's struggling with their orientation getting this material and what it will do to their self-esteem. The sad part of this is that Whatcott is clearly a gay man who's unable to deal with his orientation and feelings, so he feels the need to stomp on anyone else who is able to live as an open gay person."

Whatcott isn't done yet. He's gearing up for a massive campaign around Pride Week this June. He's said he's going to distribute 20,000 flyers that month and is bringing in the Rev. Ken Campbell, a well-known homophobe, for his heterosexual family pride day.

He's also expected to once again picket Queer City Cinema when it begins its festival in Regina on April 29. Plans are underway for a counter demonstration.

WHAT'S A HOMOPHOBE To Do?

(Regina) Bill Whatcott, the leader of the Christian Truth Alliance seems to find himself under attack from a number of quarters. Whatcott is well known in Saskatchewan for distributing virulent anti-gay and anti-abortion literature around the province. He also travels the province standing at major intersections with his eight-foot-tall billboards of aborted fetuses. He frequently pickets gay and lesbian events, as well as hospitals in the province where abortions are performed, and has tried to rally heterosexuals with his annual Heterosexual Family Pride Parade and Day.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has accepted four human rights complaints from gay men and lesbians in Saskatoon and Regina. The complaints result from a number of different anti-gay pamphlets that Whatcott has distributed to homes across the province. In one of his homophobic blitzes he accused *Perceptions* Newsmagazine of being a paedophile publication. The commission has sent the complaints to a tribunal of seven lawyers although no date has been set for the hearing. The Commission fast-tracked the complaints, recognizing the furore Whatcott causes with his antics.

On July 19 he faced a board of inquiry to see if he loses his licence with the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses. This is not the first time Whatcott has faced charges from the association that he is licensed by. Recently, Whatcott has been working for the Salvation Army in Regina as a nurse in their senior's home, although the Salvation Army refuses to discuss Whatcott or his employment.

In June, Planned Parenthood Regina filed suit in a Regina court against Whatcott, seeking a restraining order. "He certainly is intimidating people," said Planned Parenthood lawyer Doug Kovatch. "Our goal is to keep him away from Planned Parenthood and to keep him from saying a whole bunch of things about Planned Par-

enthoo that aren't true."

Whatcott, with a handful of other protesters, regularly picket the sexual health clinic carrying signs that read "Planned Parenthood Aborts Babies," "Hitler's Holocaust," and "Canada's Holocaust by Abortion," "Keep Your Pants On," and "Planned Parenthood shares in the blood of innocent babies." Whatcott also ac-

Regina Mayor Pat Fiacco refused to issue a proclamation for Whatcott's second annual Heterosexual Family Pride Day.

costs people trying to enter the clinic, calling them "fornicators."

The group wants damages for libel and slander, as well as damages for interrupting Planned Parenthood's use of their property. They are also asking that Whatcott and his supporters be prevented from coming within three blocks of the clinic.

But the trouble doesn't end there.

In June, Whatcott took out an ad in the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* complaining about how hard done by he is. The ad is headed up by a picture of Whatcott holding his new baby with his wife kneeling at his side. The headline screams "Shame on the Minister of Health! His Department has ordered Bill Whatcott to reside in the Basement of His own Home!!!"

Whatcott and his wife recently bought a private care nursing home. Perhaps he has seen the writing on the wall in regards to his licence to be a practical nurse. However, the licensing requirement from the province requires Whatcott to avoid contact with the residents in the home.

The government wants to prevent him from proselytizing with the people in his care and have said he poses a risk to those residents.

In his ad Whatcott whined, "Bill Whatcott can't even go upstairs to fix a leaky faucet or retrieve a book. Bill Whatcott's wife has been confined to the house 24 hours a day for several days now, as her husband is unable to help her with their new business in any way. She now has the additional burden of bringing food, books and other supplies to Bill Whatcott, as he can't leave the basement to get them."

The next setback came when Regina Mayor Pat Fiacco refused to issue a proclamation for Whatcott's second annual Heterosexual Family Pride Day because of the literature he distributed that Fiacco says supports hatred of another group. "The words 'heterosexual family pride day' in itself are not offensive," Fiacco said. "However (the) literature that was handed out with the individual that was seeking the proclamation was serious enough that it infringed in the (city) by-law in allowing proclamations."

Fiacco said his decision was based on advice from the city's legal department. He received a letter from the city solicitor that stated, "While Whatcott and his group celebrate the institution of marriage and family unit, they also decry other lifestyles and choices, especially homosexuality and abortion. Their publications refer to homosexuality as sexual perversion and rebellion against God and correlate homosexuality with paedophilia."

The final straw came on July 24 when American comedian Jon Stewart made light of Whatcott on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*. Whatcott was lampooned as part of the heterosexual minority in "the gay capital of Regina" and a champion for the underdog heterosexuals. The five-minute section showed Whatcott polishing his guns and practising his karate kicks.

SPEAKING OUT

(Red Deer) A 17-year-old gay male is speaking out against gay bashing after he was the victim of a brutal assault in this southern Alberta city. He was attacked while walking down a downtown city street this summer with some friends. The vicious assault crushed his right cheekbone and his teeth were pushed in. After he was rushed to the hospital, surgeons implanted a steel plate in his cheek and he is facing further dental work to repair the damage done to his teeth.

The victim said three young men in baggy pants and t-shirts followed him and his friends as they were walking home. When he fell behind his friends he was jumped by the three young men. His major attacker said, "You're a faggot, right?" The victim replied, "Maybe!" and a brutal punch sent him reeling.

"He wanted me to know who he was," the unnamed victim said. "He's white trash and he's been beaten up all his life so he beats people up to get rid of his pain."

Now the victim fears that he'll be recognized by his attackers when he returns to work and will face another assault. "They

could wait until I get off and they might do worse to me," he added.

The teen had moved to Red Deer from Edmonton to escape abuse he received while growing up in Edmonton. However, he said he'll continue to speak out against gay-bashing and isn't going to let the incident drive him out of Red Deer. "I would be letting him and his group win. I feel I should stay here and stand up for myself," he added.

The gay teen hopes his coming forward will encourage other Red Deer teens to stand up against violence. "Red Deer isn't the safe place some naïve people think it is," he said.

The teen left school in Edmonton to move to Red Deer and work. He is hesitant to return to school because of the violence he suffered while attending high school. He had books, binders and a hole punch thrown at him and was also spit on, tripped and threatened with a knife while in school.

He said he feels less safe in Red Deer after reading inflammatory anti-gay statements printed in a letter to the editor in the local paper. That letter came from a fundamentalist pastor, Stephen Boisson.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

AIDS Saskatoon	P34 (July 22/87): 16
Drag Benefits Successful	P35 (Sept. 9/87): 22
AIDS Regina	P35 (Sept. 9/87): 32
Rays of Hope [Sunshine Friends]	P45 (Nov. 9/88): 16
Saskatchewan Quilt	P50 (July 12/89): 7
AIDS Awareness	P59 (Aug. 29/90): 10
AIDS – A Prairie Perspective [AIDS and the rural prairies]	P62 (Jan. 16/91): 7
AIDS – A Prairie Perspective [young Native man addresses school class]	P64 (April 24/91): 7-8
Three Lives, Three Deaths	P74 (July 29/92): 5
Lesbians and AIDS	P97 (June 7/95): 8
AIDS Walk Saskatoon [display advertisement] [and] AIDS Walks [report]	P106 (July 24/96): 2 [and] P108 (Oct. 23/96): 11
Homophobia Is Killing Us	P107 (Sept. 11/96): 8
Saskatchewan Has AIDS: Band-AIDS Won't Do One Prairie Organization: An Instructive Tale— GLHS from Several Angles:	P109 (Dec. 4/96): 10
Gay & Lesbian Health Services [display advertisement]	P104 (April 24/96)[dated April 26 on contents page]: 27
11th Hour Reprieve	P111 (March 12/97): 9
Moving Forward	P115 (Sept. 10/97): 8
A State of Well Being	P118 (Jan. 21/98): 6-7
Gay & Lesbian Health Services [a second service advertisement]	P123 (Sept. 16/98): [14]
Funding Crisis	P144 (April 25/01): 11-12
Not a Priority	P145 (June 6/01): 13-14
A Phenomenal Success	P147 (Sept. 12/01): 11-12
Saskatoon Declaration	P148 (Oct. 24/01): 9-10
Health Coalition Formed	P151 (March 13/02): 10
Enough Is Enough	P156 (Oct. 23/02): 8
Supporting AIDS [Alberta survey]	P135 (March 8/00): 13
Nothing Shocking [Regina survey of health providers]	P140 (Oct. 25/00): 13
Sex-trade Boys Ignored [Calgary social service agency survey]	P149 (Dec. 5/01): 13

AIDS SASKATOON

Roger Carriere, president of AIDS Saskatoon, expressed delight at the standing-room-only turnout to the organization's second annual meeting held June 29. Over 50 people attended the business meeting which included a review of the group's work over the past year, a financial report and the election of a new board of eight members.

In his President's report, Carriere outlined the details of a project proposal the organization had submitted for funding to the federal health department in late spring. The plan projects the development of programs for AIDS education and prevention and support services in Saskatoon and in the northern half of the province over a one year period. Carriere expressed guarded optimism that at least some of the requested \$75,000.00 funding would be shortly forthcoming.

Carriere described three areas in need of immediate attention. In response to the first--lack of access to the organization--it was announced that a phone would be operational July 10 (242-5005) where individuals could leave messages. Initially the phone will be manned Saturday and Tuesday evenings from 7 to 10 pm as an information line. The second organizational challenge was the expansion and diversification of its membership. Carriere was pleased with the recent growth in membership and interest--particularly among lesbian and heterosexual women. The third challenge facing the organization is the rapid development of a volunteer recruitment and training strategy to marshal available talents to the expanding workload. There are increasing numbers of persons with AIDS, ARC or HIV positivity in need of emotional support.

The meeting concluded with the first Saskatoon screening of No Sad Songs, the first Canadian film about the AIDS epidemic.

Many in the audience appeared moved by the painful testimonies of individuals caught up in the struggle against AIDS in Toronto. A copy of this film is available at the Regina Public Library; individuals and organizations outside Regina can borrow this copy through the interlibrary loan service of their local library.

--Neil Richards

Drag Benefits \$uccessful

Rodger Jeffrey could see little evidence of an active 'drag scene' when he first arrived in Saskatoon but he did see an opportunity. Therefore, he and Jim Stevenson approached Numbers about a show in the future and, after discussion and viewing the quality, Numbers agreed to a preview. Thus, Jeffrey and Stevenson approached Miss Saskatchewan and the previous Miss Numbers. The result was that on August 1 an impromptu show was presented with a minimum of advertising a crowd of approximately 125 contributed (along with all of Kelly's tips) to raise \$230.00 for the Saskatoon AIDS network.

Following this beginning, Rodger Jeffrey (H.I. S.M. Amii l. nitrate), the Imperial & Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose (1985-86) of Edmonton with Miss Sask., Miss Numbers and Mr. Rumours from Regina, planned another show for August 22. "It was hoped," said Jeffrey, "that Mr. Rumours' idea of bringing the two cities together would form a bond and that something very positive would develop for a most serious cause."

With more advertising and a larger crowd, they hoped to continue from their positive and impromptu debut. All the monies are being held by Numbers and the proceeds from all of these shows is to be turned over to AIDS Saskatoon. Rodger's major concern is education. "I hope that safe sex will become automatic. Hopefully Saskatoon and Regina, like other centres such as San Francisco (without a new case in 3 months), can help control this fatal disease," he said.

The August 22 show was a blast and a packed house raised a further \$857.00! "That makes

\$1087.00; the women have been very, very supportive and there is more to come!" said Jeffrey. "The four performers were most pleased and the contribution of Miss Gay Rumours of Regina (although because of technical reasons she could not perform) was most appreciated."

To continue this community support, Roger Jeffrey is putting together a Gala drag show set for Sunday September 27 again at Numbers. "This show," said Rodger, "will primarily feature Edmonton and Calgary performers. The Albertans are most excited and they hope to continue to raise funds as they have in the past in both Edmonton and Calgary."

The Gala is planned for Sunday September 27 after the bar closes and it is hoped that many in the community will attend to support a most worthy cause and thank the performers for their energy, talent and time.

Roger Carriere, President of AIDS Saskatoon, expressed his appreciation for the staff of Numbers, the organizers of the two benefits and the benefit performers. He also said, "The money will be particularly useful at this time when we have all the added expenses of setting up our first office. We will need to continue raising funds in the community as our new grant will not cover all the costs we will have in carrying out our programs."

Don McNamee

AIDS REGINA

AIDS Regina held an open house August 15 at its new premises at 2221-14th St. E. to introduce itself and its services to health care workers and government officials. Among the thirty or so people dropping by were officials from the provincial Department of Health which recently supplemented the organization's federal funding with a \$7000.00 grant.

In a telephone interview, executive director Nils Clausson outlined the organization's immediate goals and current activities. Clausson himself will shortly travel to Edmonton to study the operation of the AIDS Network of Edmonton so that the experience garnered by that successful AIDS organization can be applied to its counterpart in Regina. Clausson also stated that he was busy with the formation of an advisory board, the creation of an information brochure about the group and the ordering of other informational materials for public distribution. In September the organization will hold training programs for phonenumber volunteers and possibly for those involved in support services to those with AIDS and ARC.

The new permanent location and public funding have permitted an expansion in AIDS activities. The AIDS Hotline, which can be reached at 525-0902, will now be staffed an additional night--Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00-10:00 pm. Volunteers on the Hotline report a dramatic increase in the number of people phoning with questions about AIDS and a change in the clientele. When the line first opened in 1985, most of the callers were homosexual men while now about 90% of the callers are heterosexual or bisexual, about one-third are women. AIDS Regina has

also established a support group for those testing positive for antibodies to HIV.

Clausson has also been opposing possible decisions of the provincial government to make HIV positivity a reportable condition and to make it mandatory for anyone testing positive to provide the names of his/her sexual partners. Such action has been recommended to the government by Dr. Lowell Loewen, the deputy registrar of the Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons. Clausson explained his organization's opposition to mandatory testing in a commentary feature in the Regina Leader Post (August 13) and reports that there now appears to be a greater appreciation of the possible downside of such a decision in government circles. Clausson stated that it would be difficult for his organization to recommend testing for AIDS antibodies if the names of those testing positive were placed on government lists.

AIDS Regina is looking at options for private fundraising to supplement its public funding. Additional private funding is needed for expenditures in areas not covered in its grant outlines and for the acquisition of educational materials whose sexual explicitness might be questioned by government officials concerned about the sensitivities of taxpayers. Until now most of AIDS Regina's support has come from donations at private parties and from the Gay Community of Regina.

Neil Richards

RAYS OF HOPE

The newest group in Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community has also been one of the more active groups over the past year. Sunshine Friends was formed last year as a response to the AIDS crisis. The impetus for the group's formation came because of the death from AIDS of a local gay man. Friends were saddened by the death and initially uncertain about what to do in the face of AIDS, which had begun to have a noticeable affect in Saskatoon. After some discussion, Sunshine Friends was born--dedicated to raising money to provide support for people with AIDS.

Currently, the group is composed of fifteen people. Some group members have AIDS/ARC or have tested positive for the HIV. Others live with people affected by AIDS or have close friends living with AIDS. Interested people can call Jim at 244-7645 for more information. Sunshine Friends describe themselves as friends helping people with AIDS. Sunshine Friends also works closely with AIDS Saskatoon; all funds raised by the group go to AIDS Saskatoon's PWA Health Fund. Money from that fund is used to help people who need special drugs, vitamins or other things in their lives to make living with AIDS easier. Since January of this year Sunshine Friends has raised \$3,500 from a variety of activities including drag shows at Numbers.

The next major fundraising event for Sunshine Friends is their Christmas AIDS Benefit on November 19. The benefit, which takes place at the Commonwealth Room in the Holiday Inn, will include a turkey dinner with feature speaker Dr. Stephen Shafran. Following the

dinner an art auction, with a dozen donated pieces from local artists, will take place. An entertainment package including dancers from the local Arthur Murray studio, clowns and vocalists will follow the auction. The evening will be capped off with a dance.

Tickets for the benefit are going for \$20.00 and are available from group members by calling 244-7645 or at the AIDS Saskatoon office or at the Whole Earth Store. So far ticket sales are slow but the group is anticipating a good turnout. A number of people from the non-gay community including clergy, aldermen, nurses and doctors are planning to attend. Tickets for the benefit must be purchased by November 13.

GENS HELLQUIST

Friends and families are encouraged to create a three-foot by three-foot panel as a personal memorial to someone they love who has died of AIDS. The Memorial Quilt is for people who are from Saskatchewan, were born here or have lived in the province. To date, two panels have been created and three more are in the works.

A centre panel containing the inscription "Saskatchewan -- The Memory of Each of You Lives in Our Heart" has been created by local artist, Marie Louise, who is also co-ordinating the project. The quilt will be housed at AIDS Saskatoon and will be displayed around

the province at events such as AIDS Awareness Week in October.

Information on creating a panel can be obtained by calling AIDS Saskatoon at 242-5005 or by calling the quilt co-ordinator, Marie Louise, at 244-8460.

SASKATCHEWAN QUILT

(Saskatoon) A Saskatchewan Memorial Quilt has been started in co-operation with AIDS Saskatoon, AIDS Regina and the PWA Network of Saskatchewan. It was decided to form a Saskatchewan quilt rather than contributing to a national one because people wanted something that would remain in the province to remember those who have died from AIDS.

AIDS AWARENESS

(Saskatoon) From October 15 to November 2, Saskatoon will be the site of a major AIDS awareness and education program. AIDS Awareness - A Joint Community Effort is being sponsored by over 30 different community groups and will feature numerous educational events on AIDS. The groups sponsoring the event are a diverse cross section of the community and include the EVERYONE WINS program of Saskatchewan Health, AIDS Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan, numerous university departments, unions, arts organizations and local health care organizations.

The three week event, which has been in the planning stage for over a year, is designed to inform and educate the community about the facts and fallacies of the AIDS pandemic. Project organizers hope to make the community aware of the truth about AIDS and inform people about what AIDS is and is not and to encourage the community to join together to support people with HIV/AIDS and to prevent its spread.

The centrepiece of the awareness program will be Visual AIDS, a provocative exhibit of AIDS educational materials. Visual AIDS has been acclaimed worldwide and will be brought to Saskatoon by its curator James Miller. The exhibit will be divided into two parts, with one part being exhibited at the Snelgrove Gallery on the UofS campus and the other part being exhibited downtown at the public library.

Numerous other exhibits will be available to the public in different venues around the city. "Someone Was Here: The Written Response to AIDS" will be on display

at the university library while the public library will be exhibiting books, videos and other material that has been produced in response to AIDS. The AKA Artists' Centre will be running videos against AIDS during the three weeks and AIDS Saskatoon will sponsor an information booth in a suburban mall during AIDS Awareness Week, October 15 to 21.

A series of lectures are also planned for the program. Writer and AIDS activist June Callwood will address "The Fragile State of Freedom" in a lecture sponsored by the university students' union. James Miller will speak on "What Makes a Good AIDS Poster" as well as "Acquired Immigrant Divinity Syndrome - The Representation of PWAs as Martyrs". Other lectures will focus on legal issues, the politics of AIDS and learning to care for those battling HIV and AIDS.

A number of theatre and video presentations will occur during the awareness program. A play by Harvey Fierstein, "Safe Sex", will be staged by Twenty-Fifth Street Theatre and the drama department at the UofS will stage "Compromised Immunity" by Andy Kirby. The campus gay and lesbian group, Gays & Lesbians on Campus, will be screening a series of safe sex videos and the films "Longtime Companions" and "Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt" will also be screened at the Broadway Theatre and Mendel Art Gallery.

Two conferences will also occur during the three weeks of awareness programming. The Persons Living With AIDS Network is sponsoring a conference on AIDS and Pastoral Care: Future Directions on October 23 to 25. St. Andrew's

and St. Thomas More colleges on campus are co-sponsoring a conference on the Christian Faith and AIDS on October 24.

The three full weeks of AIDS awareness programming should bring the issue of AIDS out of the closet in Saskatoon and increase the awareness of people in Saskatoon about AIDS and the many issues surrounding it. The varied and wide support this event has garnered already will certainly highlight AIDS for three weeks in Saskatoon.

AIDS - A PRAIRIE PERSPECTIVE

A young man returns home from the big city to the farm for Christmas. The usual anticipation for a happy return and exchange of stories with parents and siblings is missing. The young man is lost in his own thoughts. While the lights of Christmas distract, they do not hold his eye.

The heaviness of spirit is because the man knows this will be the HIV Christmas. Before he leaves parents and siblings will share his burden and their relationship will take on a new level of intimacy. The mutuality of love they have known will be tested in a fashion heretofore unimagined.

This story, or some version of it, is being repeated again and again in small towns and cities across the prairies. It's become a cliché to say people have been our greatest export. While the impact of the AIDS/HIV crisis on large cities in Canada and abroad is well reported, the fact that AIDS/HIV comes home to the farms, villages and towns of the prairies is less known. This phenomenon, which we see with increasing frequency raises several questions.

The general question is: "Are the rural prairies ready for AIDS/HIV?" The specific questions seem daunting, but are crucial.

For example, has AIDS/HIV awareness reached a level that family members won't experience unnecessary panic about transmission to children and grandchildren? When the word of AIDS/HIV infection in a local family spreads throughout the small town will relatives, especially school children, be subject to teasing or social stigma? What are the attitudes of local churches and clergy to AIDS and persons affected by HIV, particularly if the latter are gay

or discovered to have contracted the virus from drug use? Will ministers be able to be supportive or will homophobia and judgmentalism preclude a useful role? And, if the HIV/AIDS-affected person is gay, how will that affect the family and community response to him, especially if he chooses to live at home at some point? If the HIV/AIDS-affected person needs medical care in the local hospital will the doctors and staff be properly prepared to deal with the specialized treatments associated with AIDS/HIV and the psychosocial, emotional and physiological aspects of HIV/AIDS?

In Alberta the provincial health department has taken a very progressive initiative to respond to many of these issues. The AIDS Community Response Team is a provincially funded group of consultants who visit rural communities upon invitation of two or more groups in one community. The consultants use a process which helps health care and other professionals and community leaders assess their community's state of readiness to meet HIV/AIDS, discover gaps in the community's response readiness and plan to make improvements.

This model, or something like it, which in scope goes beyond the mandate of community-based AIDS agencies alone, should certainly be examined by Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The potential for strengthening the care and support system when HIV/AIDS comes home on the prairies is significant. Lives can be healed and extended with a holistic spectrum of care. We need to call on those who have the power to do so to implement programs that will bring about the changes we need.

Ralph Wushke

AIDS - A PRAIRIE PERSPECTIVE

Ralph Wushke

Imagine yourself in a school class room with 50 native youth. The smell of burning sage and sweetgrass fills the room. Bob, who introduces himself as Okemaisis, Cree for Thunder Child, asks those present to pray with him in Cree. After that he tells his story. It is a story he hopes will save lives. It is another "prairie perspective" on AIDS.

"As a child I was sexually abused by older boys and men on the reserve. Talking or thinking about sex was taboo. I knew what was going on was wrong but I couldn't talk about it. Even as an adult I couldn't talk about it. I felt it was my fault that these men were taking my body and abusing me sexually. I learned to stuff the pain and anger. It took away my dignity and pride, my self-esteem. I could not feel right because there was something I had to keep hidden.

At 14 or 15 I discovered alcohol; for the first time I could escape the realities of my existence. I was still being abused and was starting to seek my own partners. I was starting to abuse others and not care for myself. The alcohol became a friend and I could use it as an excuse. I became a liar because I could never be honest with anybody.

When I started to live in other cities I started going to places where gay people gathered. I started feeling good about my identity, but it was not viewed as good. At work I said 'Sure there's lots of women out there,' but at night it was time to party with the boys. I wanted to please everyone.

When I was 29 I took a really good look at my life. I saw there was something wrong. I thought by then I would have a job, and be either a social worker or teacher. In-

stead I found myself living on welfare in a one room apartment with 3 other guys, having a hard time paying \$300 per month rent. \$1500 per month went on booze and drugs.

At 29 I said, 'there's got to be some changes here.' I went to AA and I started to search and find answers. For the first time in my life I was able to stay sober for 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, 6 months. For me that was success. I attended my first AA Round-Up and learned about alcoholism and drug abuse.

About that time AIDS was starting to take some of my friends. The only way to find out if I was carrying the virus was to get tested. When the results came back I was told I was HIV positive. 'What do I do now?' I wondered, 'go back to drinking and drugging?' For me that was not the answer. Now I had to develop the relationship with the Higher Power to sustain me. The first time I acknowledged that I was HIV+ was at an AA meeting.

I got involved with another alcoholic. It was another abusive relationship but it taught me a lot about my own co-dependence. It was in the pain of that relationship that I was able to remember and for the first time talk about the sexual abuse that I had experienced as a child. All that past history has something to do with what I am living with today and the fact that I am HIV+.

Last June I got herpes zoster, otherwise known as shingles. It was time to tell my mom and dad and my brothers and sisters that I might not live as long as we expected. Rather than tell them alone I decided to do it with the traditional feast of my people. I had a feast at my home reserve and there I told them that I was

HIV+. Doing it that way made it easier for them.

Last November I got another opportunistic infection and was told I had AIDS. I was living in B.C. with an elder who was treating and teaching me traditionally. I was searching out traditional ceremonies: the sweatlodge, the sundance, the feast and the fast. I found healing from the pain I had experienced. I let the pain go to the Creator.

I was hospitalized and realized it was time to tell my family I had AIDS. I had seen a lot of my friends placed in hospital who never came out. I didn't want to tell my mother alone. My mother came to get me. She said, 'it's time to come home, Bob.' My parents and brothers and sisters have had a tough time. But they have learned to accept the fact that I have AIDS. Now they are there to support me and to help me.

While I was in Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon I was delirious and having convulsions. I saw this great white light and thought I was dying. 'So this is what it's going to be like,' I thought. But the Creator sent me back. It wasn't time for me to go. I have a task to do yet. This is my task, to talk to others about AIDS, especially my people. The Creator has given me the strength and opportunity to teach about AIDS.

Gone are the days when we can keep sexuality in the closet. We have to talk about it, because now there is a disease that takes lives. It's not up to your mother to protect you. You have to take the responsibility to protect yourself and others so that you don't get this disease.

The healing process of the last

(continued on page 8)

(continued from page 7)

five and one half years has been one of mental, emotional and spiritual growth. For me this journey has been a wonderful one. I have no more regrets, no more remorse. I have had a healing journey. Now I am able to say I love and respect myself. There was a time when I couldn't say that. Now I have learned to love others unconditionally and honour them. I no longer give my power to others.

When I was in the hospital the doctor gave me one and one half years to live. I say bullshit to that. The Creator is the only one who knows when my time will come. Today I am not afraid to die."

Raplh Wushke, executive director of AIDS Saskatoon has prepared this transcript based on Bob's presentation to students at a number of Reserve Schools in northern Saskatchewan, March, 1991

AIDS - A PRAIRIE PERSPECTIVE - Ralph Wushke

THREE LIVES - THREE DEATHS

My heart is heavy with grief and loss. Bob, Regan and Johnnie have died since I last put pen to paper for this column. All of them lived with HIV/AIDS in a way that makes anyone who knows AIDS proud. When life dealt them a card they neither expected nor wanted they held it and played it with courage. Each of them took their story to the public in one way or another, and partly in association with AIDS Saskatoon strove to reveal the human face of AIDS as one of dignity, pride and strength.

Bob Mike, who often asked to be called Okemawassiss, Cree for "Child of Thunder", came from Beardy's reserve near Duck Lake, Sask. HIV/AIDS in his life moved him to tell his story to any who would listen, especially his sisters and brothers in the Aboriginal community. Thousands were the kilometres he logged throughout Saskatchewan relating without shame his story of abuse, alcoholism, co-dependency, life in the big city of Vancouver and HIV. He told the story not for sympathy but so that others might not repeat it. He told his story on television and radio. He was not afraid to confront traditional values if he thought they were hampering AIDS prevention education. Bob drew on the Native spiritual tradition and his sense of humour as he faced life and death with AIDS. He knew the support of "all his relations" through his journey and was deeply loved in life and in death.

Regan Grant, raised in Saskatchewan towns like Neilburg and Melfort, went on to sing the music he loved -- opera, oratorio and lieder -- in Toronto. He had a close brush with death there in 1990 and was rescued from the medical care system by his mother and friends who saw that he was nursed back to health. After moving home to Tisdale, Regan spoke about his life with HIV/AIDS to many groups, often with his mother, Mary, including to a national audience with Peter Gzowski on CBC's Morningside in the winter of 1992. Regan always chose his words carefully

and often with humour. The first time I visited him in the hospital I recall playing my pastoral role to the hilt and focusing on "his issues". After several minutes of that Regan paused and, with a quizzical smile, broke the patient-caregiver convention asking, "And, so, who are you? What's your life about?" In his last days, Regan was cared for by his parents and family members in Tisdale.

John Haralkin, "Johnnie" to his friends, was a sparky artist, writer and wit. The first time I saw him he was wearing a bold "Silence = Death" t-shirt of the ACT-UP variety. He was wearing it for an appointment with his doctor so there would be no mistaking his point of view. Johnnie was raised in Saskatoon but lived in and loved great cities, especially New York and

London. In Saskatoon he was the subject of a feature in The Star Phoenix in 1991 which revealed someone who was living life, HIV notwithstanding, to the fullest and who, above all, eschewed pity. On the two occasions I heard Johnnie speak to medical and nursing students, he spoke in forthright terms about the difference caregivers can make, for better or worse, in the lives of their patients. Johnnie's legacy includes a novel, now in the final editing. As death drew near, Johnnie was cared for and surrounded by the love of his father, sisters and friends.

Three lives, each an inspiration to all who live and work the HIV/AIDS.

Ralph Wushke is executive director of AIDS Saskatoon.

PERCEPTIONS

As lesbians, we may believe that we are immune to HIV and AIDS. We, like most other groups (especially women) that are not gay male, believe that AIDS will not affect our lives. Although it may or may not be true that lesbians are perceived as a "low risk" group, it is imperative to remember it is what we do and not who we are that places us at risk.

We are often guilty of defining ourselves in only a sexually and politically correct context. This may be a comfort to our sense of solidarity in the face of oppression, but is a dangerous assumption in the face of HIV and AIDS.

As lesbians, our collective life experience is as varied and complex as that of the rest of the population. For some of us the joy of expressing our sexuality has been enhanced by a loving and supportive atmosphere, for others a journey of fear, shame and isolation. We are different—from each other and from a society that may not support or validate us.

In the age of AIDS, lesbians have been routinely seen as a "low risk" group. Some of us have smugly identified ourselves as God's chosen people. There has been a shameful dearth of information and research regarding the risk factors of lesbian sexual practices. To relieve ourselves of the responsibility to educate ourselves, assess our personal risk and speak honestly to our partners, we are, in the long run, doing ourselves a great disservice and possibly reinforcing the lifestyles that place us at risk.

As with all groups we must remember it is what we do that places us at risk. We are all different, with different experiences and habits; our lesbian identity does not wipe out our past sexual or social behaviour nor does it necessarily reflect on our present practices. We must recognize this as true and valid for us to see ourselves as the diverse, multifaceted community we are.

Who are we? Well, some of us have been married, are still married or are in a primary sexual relationship with a man. We have children, either through agreement with a male partner or through artificial insemination. We may have primary relationships with women but occasionally have sex with men. Our partner(s) may be in a sexual relationship with a man. We have been, at some time or still are, intravenous drug users, or are the partner of an IDU. We may drink and drug too much and make questionable choices about who we have sex with. We have woken up with someone we don't know. We engage in unsafe S/M behaviour or enjoy rough sex. We share our sex toys. We have been raped and some of us exchange sex for money. We do not know, or are afraid to ask our partner about her sexual or drug history, or we may not tell our partner any or all of the above for fear of rejection, judgment or shame.

Until we learn to accept and affirm that we do engage in these behaviours and that these behaviours do not compromise our identity in any way, we will remain at risk. When we assess our personal risk we must

consider our behaviour and also the political and social barriers that prevent access to responsible, unbiased information.

Lesbian sex is seen to be "soft core" and we are seen by the professional community as having a low sex drive. This attitude is reflected in the almost non-existent information and research directed at lesbian sexual activity and HIV. We are understudied and ignored and this creates a tremendous education gap. Therefore, our safer sex needs are not being met.

We must remember that women are now the fastest growing group of persons being infected with HIV. We can no longer ignore the frightening impact this will have on the population of primary caregivers, single parents, wage earners, friends and lovers.

As women and lesbians, we need to set aside our judgments and preconceived notions of "correct" behaviour, and begin to communicate with our friends and partners honestly and directly. While we continue to deny the real threat of HIV and AIDS in our community, we will remain at risk.

This article has by no means even scratched the surface of the dilemma of HIV infection for lesbians. This is just the starting point. The opportunity to examine our lives, to be open to change and willing to accept the choices of our sisters is imperative. Our self validation is the first step to a healthier and more open community. ♣



AIDS WALK SASKATOON

A PLEDGE IS THE FIRST STEP

**WALK! VOLUNTEER!
DONATE! ENTER A TEAM!**

**CALL
242-
5005**

**Sunday
Sept. 29 '96**

Canada's largest one-day
AIDS fundraiser, benefitting
AIDS organizations across Canada.

A fundraising project of AIDS Saskatoon, Gay & Lesbian Health Services and the Persons Living With AIDS Network

AIDS WALKS

(Saskatoon) Approximately 150 people braved the first snow-storm of the fall to participate in AIDS Walk Saskatoon on September 29. Organizers had expected at least twice that number to show up but the near zero weather and off-and-on again snow kept many people away.

Organizers still considered the walk to be a big success and expected to raise at least \$20,000 from the walk, a substantial increase over previous AIDS Walks in Saskatoon. "It's amazing that this many people showed up to support the walk and help raise money for AIDS work considering how lousy the weather is," said Jeff Dodds, executive director of AIDS Saskatoon.

This was the first year that AIDS Saskatoon was joined by other groups in sponsoring the walk. Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) helped plan this year's walk and walkers were able to direct their pledges to GLHS or AIDS Saskatoon.

"We're pleased to be part of the walk and help raise awareness of HIV and AIDS issues," said Gens Hellquist, the executive director of GLHS. "Our share of the money raised will help us continue offering programs that address the broader health and social issues than cause people to devalue their lives and risk contracting the HIVirus," he added.

Organizers had planned an afternoon of entertainment in the park with ethnic dancers and a number of local bands and performers. The dancers were cold from standing around so performed to a small crowd while the walkers were out on the 5 kilometre route. Only one of the scheduled bands were able to play before the afternoon was called off. Most people did not want to stand around in the cold and falling snow and drifted off before the opening band had finished their numbers.

Saskatoon's walk was one of more than 60 that occurred across the country that day. Over \$2.7 million was raised across Canada through the many walks. That money will go to community-based groups addressing HIV and AIDS issues.

Other communities in Saskatchewan also

got involved with the national walk. AIDS Regina staged their fourth annual walk. A dreary, rainy day kept Regina's walk small with less than a hundred people braving the elements. Last year AIDS Regina had 350 people walking and raised over \$25,000. This year the total after the walk was only \$12,000 although organizers expected some additional pledges and sponsorships to come in in the days after the walk.

In Prince Albert a small group of people walked to raise awareness of AIDS. Their walk did not solicit donations but focused on awareness issues. Local AIDS activist Barb Irwin said people in Prince Albert need to realize that they are not isolated from AIDS and that it is already in the community. Irwin said she hoped the walk would remind Prince Albert that they have people in their midst who are dealing with AIDS on a daily basis.

AIDS Moose Jaw didn't hold a walk of their own but a small handful travelled to Regina to participate in their walk. According to Daryl Yachiw, an AIDS Moose Jaw volunteer, his city is too narrow-minded to allow a walk to happen in that small city. "The stigma has forced the group to go to Regina," Yachiw added.

HOMOPHOBIA IS KILLING US

(Saskatoon) Homophobia is killing many lesbians and gay men and costing our health care systems millions of dollars, according to a brief prepared by Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS). The brief has been prepared by GLHS as part of their lobbying efforts to secure provincial government funding to support the work they do.

"If governments are really serious about the new directions of ensuring population health and the concepts of wellness, then they must begin to seriously address homophobia and the enormous toll it exacts," said the brief's author Gens Hellquist. "We can no longer tolerate the countless deaths that homophobia directly and indirectly causes," he went on to say. "Not to mention the enormous cost to our society in health care and social service costs for treatments that wouldn't be necessary if homophobia wasn't so pervasive in our society."

In one section, the brief confronts the many myths that allows homophobia to thrive and counters them by highlighting the many studies that show how invalid they really are. "If you tell a lie enough times then it becomes accepted as fact," said Hellquist. "We must tell those who wish to continue propagating the myths and lies to either prove them or shut up," he added. "Allowing them to continue only means the death of more lesbians, gay men and bisexuals."

*"We must tell those
who wish to continue
propagating the myths
and lies to either prove
them or shut up"*

The brief also documents the many health issues that are epidemic in the gay, lesbian and bisexual community. It highlights those studies that clearly indicate that gay men, lesbian and bisexuals face suicide rates, substance abuse rates and mental illness rates at least three times higher than the general community. According to the brief, homophobia is so pervasive in our society, lesbian, gay men and bisexuals must struggle to develop, and maintain, good self-esteem. Those who are unable to develop positive self-esteem frequently resort of drugs or alcohol to deaden the pain or find the pain so difficult that the only option they can see is ending their life. Using suicide statistics in Saskatchewan for 1993, GLHS points out in the brief that 13 gay, lesbian or bisexual youth killed themselves in that year because of homophobia.

All these health and social issues not only cost human lives but end up costing our health care system million of dollars each year. The brief estimates that the government spends over \$38 million each year because of substance abuse in the lesbian, gay and bisexual community. When HIV and AIDS is factored in, the costs skyrocket. Each case of HIV is estimated to cost our province \$1 million in health care and social service costs, as well as a loss of

productivity. Studies show that because of self-esteem issues, young gay men as still becoming infected at a high rate.

The brief calls on the government to take decisive action in a number of ways to deal with the problems associated with homophobia. "It's crucial that the government fund organizations like GLHS, as well as others, that are working to alleviate the problems associated with homophobia," Hellquist said. The brief states that all levels of government, and all departments, must actively work to confront homophobia at its roots.

Hellquist said GLHS's lobbying campaign will determine whether this government is really serious about the concepts of wellness and population health that they have been mouthing for the past few years. "It will also determine whether GLHS will continue to survive and deliver crucial services," Hellquist added. "We have been surviving on project grants, primarily from the federal government, and we can't continue to spend all our time chasing funding when we need to be providing support and education in the community," he added. "This government passed legislation to protect the rights of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and if they're serious about equality they must take action to ensure that all citizens live in an environment that fosters their good health. Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals have the right to good health and GLHS is one organization that has been successful in helping people build positive self-esteem."

According to Hellquist, GLHS is seen by many people across the country of a way to address HIV and the other health problems caused by homophobia. "The gay and lesbian community, as well as the larger community, needs to better support GLHS," Hellquist said. "We are just beginning to see the results of the work we have been doing for the past five years. Now is not the time to let GLHS fade out," he added. "Without GLHS in our community we will see the continuation of lost lives and lost potential. That indeed would be unfortunate and would devalue all our lives a bit more."

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Gay & Lesbian Health Services is looking for a part-time staff person to work on a new project. The project will involve working with lesbian, gay & bisexual youth. Prospective employee must be aware of, and comfortable with, problems faced by youth dealing with sexual orientation issues. They must also be well organized and capable of working with minimal supervision. Must be able to work flexible schedule. Should have some counselling skills and patience is a must. Awareness of other agencies who work with youth in Saskatoon would be valuable.

Applications should be mailed to
**Executive Director, GLHS,
PO Box 8581, Saskatoon, SK
S7K 6K7.**

They may also be dropped off at
300 - 241 - 2nd Avenue S in Saskatoon.

Deadline for applications is Sept 19.

SASKATCHEWAN HAS AIDS

(Saskatoon) The Saskatchewan AIDS Network (SAN) recently stepped up their lobbying campaign to convince the provincial government to increase the amount of funding they provide to community-based groups dealing with HIV and AIDS issues. Currently the province provides \$103,500 for community groups which is split between AIDS Regina and AIDS Saskatoon. The other 12 member groups of the SAN do not receive any government funding for AIDS work.

Last May SAN unveiled their "Saskatchewan Has AIDS" campaign which consisted of billboards across the province, bus signs in the four largest cities, newspaper ads in many small town newspapers and provincial television ads. The campaign was intended to draw to the public's attention the perils of the AIDS epidemic and how the government's response to date has been inadequate.

Shortly after the launch of the campaign Saskatchewan health minister Eric Cline met with representatives of the SAN. He asked those representatives to prepare a brief documenting the concerns of SAN members and promised he would read that brief and then meet with the representatives. The brief was sent to Cline in late summer but the SAN was unable to arrange a follow-up meeting.

The SAN groups met in October and decided it was necessary to step up their lobbying campaign. The groups felt that they were no longer able to keep up with the demands of providing education and support around HIV/AIDS and needed a stronger commitment from the province.



The first action of the renewed lobbying campaign occurred on November 16 when SAN representatives showed up at the NDP convention in Saskatoon and handed out leaflets to convention delegates. The leaflet was titled "SASKATCHEWAN HAS AIDS: BAND-AIDS. WON'T DO" and addressed some of the facts about AIDS. The leaflet informed delegates that as many as 3,000 people in the province could be infected with HIV with only a small number of those people knowing their HIV status. It also pointed out that the average age of infection by HIV has dropped to 23 years of age, meaning that many teenagers in the province are being infected. Delegates were informed that each case of HIV costs the economy at least \$1 million in lost productivity and health-care costs. SAN called on delegates to discuss the issue at the convention and to urge the government to take the AIDS epidemic seriously. Delegates were also handed bandages with **BAND-AIDS. WON'T DO!** printed on them. Many of the delegates wore the bandages on their lapel during the convention.

On November 28 SAN representatives held a news conference and presented the government with an invoice for \$14,150,000, an amount of money SAN groups believe they easily save the province each year with the work they do in AIDS education. SAN

spokesman Jeff Dodds drew attention to a chart that indicated that the epidemic could cost Saskatchewan's health-care system over \$600 million dollars if there are indeed 3,000 people with HIV in Saskatchewan.

The following day full page ads appeared in the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* and the *Regina Leader-Post*. The ad was a letter

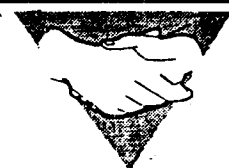
addressed to the citizens of Saskatchewan drawing their attention to the problem of AIDS funding in Saskatchewan and asking readers to call the Minister of Health to urge him to provide "adequate levels of funding to support all rural and urban organizations addressing this epidemic." The ad also contained the names of over a thousand Saskatchewan residents who support increased funding for community-based AIDS organizations.

On December 2 SAN groups began faxing thousands of letters of support to the office of the Health Minister. The letters have been collected from across the province and call on the government to provide adequate funding to enable community groups to combat the AIDS epidemic. Included with the letters were petitions containing thousands of names.

"This campaign is crucial to the fight against AIDS," said SAN steering committee member Gens Hellquist. "We have reached a crucial point in the fight against AIDS in this province. If community groups are unable to obtain better funding to fight this epidemic we will loose that fight with many people dying needlessly. We would encourage everyone in the province to call the Minister of health at 1-306-787-7350 to let him know that better funding is essential."

One Prairie Organization: GLHS From Several Angles

Gay & Lesbian
Health Services
of Saskatoon



3rd floor - 241 - 2nd Avenue S

Building a strong & healthy gay/lesbian/bisexual community

Gay & Lesbian Line: 665-1224

Outside Saskatoon : 1-800-358-1833

Someone to talk to - community information

Out & Proud Youth

Meets every Friday - 7:30pm

Lesbian & Gay Parents Group

Meets 1st Wed - 7:30pm & 3rd Sun - 1:30pm

OUT IN SASKATCHEWAN

Call Gens or Sheri at **1-800-358-1833** for information
on group starting in North Battleford soon and
information on Prince Albert & Lloydminster area groups.

11TH HOUR REPRIEVE

(Saskatoon) Things did not look good for Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) in January. A year of work and lobbying for provincial government funding appeared to have gone nowhere and the organization was looking at closing its doors. In January the Board of GLHS made the difficult decision to close the doors by the end of February if no indication of funding was in sight.

After that meeting the organization faxed a letter to all city MLAs, the Ministers of Health and of Social Services and the chair of the local Health District informing them of the impending closure. Within a week of receiving the letter MLAs, the Health Minister and the Health District Chairperson all responded.

Representatives of the Health department called GLHS to tell them not to close their doors, that the government was willing to find a way to support the health agency. They also committed themselves to providing \$7,000 a month to keep the doors open until a funding package was put in place.

"We were ecstatic to get the news," said GLHS executive Director Gens Hellquist. "We were really worried that the work we have been doing in Saskatoon for the past five years would come to an abrupt end. That would have left many people in the queer community without a place to turn when they were in crisis or needing support," Hellquist added.

According to Jesse Invik, GLHS chair, representatives from the departments of Health, Social Services, Education and Justice are meeting to look at the means to provide ongoing funding for their agency. "We're glad to see all four departments involved in funding GLHS," Invik said. "We've always felt that those four departments bear a large responsibility in addressing the health and social needs of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals," she added.

GLHS was established in the fall of 1991 and with federal government funding under the Health Promotion Directorate and the AIDS Community Action Plan they have developed an agency that works in a number of areas to

help build a healthier community. "We've begun a number of initiatives that are addressing the epidemic rates of suicide, substance abuse, mental illness, low self-esteem and HIV," Hellquist said. Those include a range of support programs and groups, a strong educational component, a rural outreach program and a recreational/social program. Unfortunately, the federal funding was only on a short-term project basis and those projects have all expired. The group was also finding it difficult to pay operating costs such as rent, telephones, equipment, supplies and resource material on project funding.

Since the group opened their doors on January 2, 1992 they have established the community's first support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth, Out & Proud Youth. They have operated a number of support groups including ones for lesbian and gay parents and their kids, lesbians dealing with substance use issues and lesbian survivors of childhood sexual abuse group. They have assisted in the formation of a Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays group, a female partners and ex-partners of gay and bisexual men and a gay and lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous group. Their Gay & Lesbian Line handles over 5,000 calls a year on a wide range of issues.

Education has also been an important part of GLHS's work. "We believe that those agencies and professionals in our community offering services in the human services field must be able to address our issues without homophobia entering into the relationship," Hellquist said. The organization provides training each year to hundreds of students and professionals on the issues and needs in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community and how they can address those needs in a sensitive and non-homophobic way.

GLHS also provides a drop-in program, a community library, a community queer store, recreational programs like softball and video nights as well as organizing a yearly pride week. Three years ago they started their rural outreach program to help lesbians, gays and bisexuals in smaller cities and rural areas network and build

their own support groups. A toll-free line also provides a means for people in rural areas to get information and support.

"We've always believed it was counterproductive to fight for spousal and other rights without also providing means for people to develop good self-esteem that allows them to access those hard fought rights," said Hellquist. "Homophobia still traps most members of our community in the closet or in low self-esteem that doesn't enable them to stand up and say this is who I am and I want access," he added.

The board and staff is busy planning for the new core funding. "We expect to have sufficient resources to increase our staffing levels," said Invik. "We've been laying staff off the past few months so we will soon be looking for new staff that will allow us to expand our programs from a solid basis," she added.

The group is also looking at moving into new premises. "We've outgrown our current space, which never really worked that well for us," said Hellquist. "It would also be nice to be in a space that has air conditioning in the summer, reliable heat in the winter, is accessible and has good air circulation," he added.

The group expects to hear about the level of funding after the provincial budget is presented on March 20. They are also beginning to advertise for new staff positions. "We know the positions we ideally need to operate our programs effectively," said Invik. "Once we know the funding level we will have a clearer picture of what positions we realistically can fill."

"We're all excited about the upcoming changes," said Hellquist. "Even though we will be getting some new staff positions we will still need many volunteers to help us meet the volume of needs in our community. The role of staff, in most instances, will be to help co-ordinate volunteers in the operation of our programs. The new funding will help us solidify and expand current programs and develop new programs and activities that will help build a healthy community for all of us," Hellquist added.

MOVING FORWARD

(Saskatoon) After months of waiting to hear about funding, Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) is planning for some major changes in the next few months. Last February, Saskatchewan Health indicated they would provide interim funding to GLHS until a committee of representatives from the health, education, social services and justice departments discussed ways to provide core funding. GLHS has been waiting since then to hear what that funding package would look like so they could make plans for future operations.

"We still haven't received official word about what our funding picture will look like," said GLHS executive director Gens Hellquist. "However, we have received unofficial word that we will continue to receive the same amount we have received from the health department since last March," he added. GLHS has been receiving \$7,000 a month since last March. Hellquist also announced that they have been informed that they will be receiving a one year Child Action Plan grant of \$14,000 to work with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth.

"We are pleased that the government recognizes the vital work we are doing in the lesbian and gay community, as well as the larger community," Hellquist said. "This is the first time in this country that a provincial government has recognized their responsibility and provided core funding to an organization working to combat homophobia and its effects. But we are disappointed that they didn't feel the issues faced by gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people was important enough to fund us at a level that would allow us to become pro-active instead of reacting to the requests for services that come through our doors."

GLHS had requested a grant of approximately \$250,000, which is what they believe they realistically need to meet the requests for services and programs in the northern half of the province. "It is interesting that the government can find \$1.5 mil-

lion for problem gambling, which affects approximately 2% of the population, but can only find less than \$100,000 to meet the health and social needs of our community," Hellquist said.

Inside sources have indicated that only the health department will be involved in funding GLHS with the other three departments

"GLHS has laid a solid foundation for a unique and valuable organization."

- Hellquist

choosing to sit on the sidelines. "We're disappointed that justice, education and social services don't feel that queer people deserve adequate services as all three departments are currently spending millions to combat the effects of homophobia," Hellquist said.

Over the past four months demand for services has sky-rocketed at GLHS. Calls to the Gay & Lesbian Line and drop-ins to the centre were up 54% in May, 55% in June, 95% in July and 101% in August. Once school starts and people are back from holidays, Hellquist expects the numbers to continue to grow, especially with requests for educational workshops. "I'm not sure why we are seeing such huge increases in numbers of people accessing our services but there seems to be a flood of people coming out right now, both young and not so young," Hellquist said. "I suspect Ellen coming out has an influence as has a mailing of information to over 600 agencies, schools and professionals we did last spring."

GLHS expects to make numerous changes

in the next few months. High on the list is a move to better facilities. "We need a space that is accessible because many people can not get up the two flights of stairs to our office. We also would like a space that has air conditioning in summer and real heat in the winter," Hellquist said. "We also need larger space as our current location is no longer big enough and suitable for the many things we are doing."

GLHS also wants to expand programming over the next few months. "We are looking at things like a men's discussion group, a women's discussion group, a coming out group, age related groups like an over-40 group and a twenty-something group," Hellquist said. "We also want to expand our social and recreational programming by offering more dances and a concert series with local and imported talent and activities like a bowling league."

Hellquist said the new programming and new space will only happen if there is support from the community. "With a much smaller grant than we had hoped for we will need to raise a significant amount of funds in the community, not to mention recruit more dedicated volunteers if we hope to successfully implement our plans," Hellquist said.

"This is an exciting time for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community in Saskatoon, and Saskatchewan," said Hellquist. "GLHS has laid a solid foundation for a unique and valuable organization. Now we can begin to build on that to create a community that allows all of us to reach our potential without having to deal with homophobia and intolerance on a constant basis. The work that GLHS is doing is having an impact on everyone, whether they realize it or not."

GLHS is holding a training session for phone-line volunteers on September 20 and 21. Anyone interested in working in that area can call Garnet at 665-1224 to register. They will also be announcing their fund-raising campaign in a few weeks.

Health — a term I hear being bandied about a lot lately. The health-care system is in danger of collapsing. There's a shortage of high priced equipment like CAT scans; neonatal equipment, magnetic resonance imagers, etc. etc. etc. to insure our good health. There are not enough doctors willing to work in rural areas thereby jeopardizing the health of residents in those areas. Breast cancer, colon cancer, AIDS, mad cow disease and the chicken flu are all on the rise threatening to plant us six feet under. Pollution, second-hand smoke, carcinogens in our drinking water all threaten to send us to meet our maker. It makes me wonder how the human race has managed to survive all these years when all these perils are lurking around, waiting for an opportunity to strike us down.

Over the last few years governments have trotted out the wellness model in order to protect our health. That didn't last long and now they have moved on to the term *population health* although few bureaucrats in the health care system can adequately explain what that model really means. From my interactions with those in the upper echelons of the system it has become obvious that they don't have a clue what is meant by population health although it supposedly is driving our health care system these days.

I happen to work for an organization that includes the word *health* in its name. I've been asked numerous times why we call ourselves Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) when we have no doctors or nurses on staff. The decision to include *health* in the name of GLHS was done because we see health as something that is determined by a number of factors. Unfortunately the health system is more concerned about illness than about health. Health is not merely the absence or presence of some disease but rather a matter of our total well-being; our emotional, mental, spiritual and physical well-being.

We're part of a community that has a horrendous range of serious health issues. These include suicide, substance abuse, mental illness, AIDS, isolation, depression and loneliness. Rates are considerably higher in our community than the general population. These health issues aren't caused by the usual factors. Rather, they are a factor of the rampant homophobia that still pervades our society and culture. Even in 1998, HIV and AIDS are spread in our community because of the effects of homophobia.

I know my well-being is much more dependent on factors other than the usual things like diet, genetics or pollutants in the environment. I don't deny that these are factors that can affect my health but I am much more worried about homophobia which is much more likely to cause me ill health than most other things. Homophobia makes it difficult for me to build a community that supports me unconditionally, which adversely affects my emotional health. Homophobia

subjects me to constant barrages of hate, lies and distortions which impact on my mental health. Homophobia puts me at a higher risk of physical violence than the general population. Homophobia makes it more difficult for me to find support for my spiritual beliefs. All these parts of my identity are interconnected and are part of what keeps me healthy.

*We're part of a
community that
has a horrendous
range of serious
health issues.*

When I look around my community I can see evidence of how much homophobia robs me of a healthy community and environment. Over the past few years I have watched two men die from the ravages of alcoholism. Both of those men were an important part of my early coming out process but their alcoholism and the behaviours brought about by that alcoholism placed a wall between us. Both men, who were capable and intelligent, died around 60 years of age, long before their time. Homophobia killed them because they had difficulties dealing with the lack of support from families

and communities.

As someone who has worked for a quarter century building a community that would support me and my gay brothers and lesbian sisters, I've seen plenty of evidence of how homophobia constantly interferes in building a healthy community. People who are constantly told they are worthless begin to believe the lies and begin to believe they are indeed worthless. They don't believe they deserve to have good things in their lives, like a supportive community, and that has a drastic impact on their health, physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. Even when they stumble across a supportive environment they have difficulties accepting that support. Homophobia has made them incapable of accepting good things.

Recently, Gay & Lesbian Health Services moved from the dingy hole they lived in for six years into considerably larger and brighter premises. The rent is also somewhat higher and I can already hear some people asking why are we spending so much on rent when there are people in our community living in poverty. We're spending it because we believe our community deserves it. Our community deserves to have a comfortable, cheerful and pleasant space where we can meet to find safety, support and friendship which will enhance our well-being in all areas. We're spending it because it's important to the health of our community and to the health of all of us.

We're also expanding our programs, although the amount of that expansion will depend greatly on the number of people willing to volunteer to help keep things going. Many of the programs are being developed to allow people to obtain mental, emotional and spiritual support because we deserve to have those things in our lives. Our well-being, at all levels, is dependent on the support we obtain for ourselves as unique individuals.

Frequently I hear people say they don't need GLHS, or other groups in the community, because they already have a family or friends who support them. Those in our community who've been able to find support on their own are the lucky few. Most gay people still find it a difficult struggle to come out and find a place in the world where they are supported.

Perhaps those who've been able to build a support system could share that support with others in our community who haven't been as lucky. Role models are valuable to everyone. I often hear people complain that gay or lesbian relationships don't last. I correct them stating that there are indeed many lesbian and gay couples that have been together decades in Saskatoon. However, it is difficult for people to accept my assertions when most of those who've developed long-term stable relationships often remove themselves from the community for numerous reasons, some valid and some not so valid. That makes it extremely difficult for those longing for a long-term stable relationship to see role models of those who have built what they are seeking.

I believe that even those who are not accessing groups and organizations in the community are still reaping the benefits of those visible organizations. Those visible organizations, or groups, in our community are part of lessening homophobia and providing a visible presence to counter the lies and distortions. Those visible groups are a definite part of creating a healthier environment for all of us.

It's crucial that we view health, or well-being, both ours and others', in broader terms than the absence of some disease. It's crucial that we're all part of the fight against homophobia which threatens all our sense of well-being. It's important that we view groups like Gay & Lesbian Health Services, the Bridge City Chorus, GLUS, PFLAG, and the GLB Centre, as being involved in health issues because they are all involved in dealing with homophobia in various ways. Health is a complex issue that involves many factors of our lives and our community. **P**

GAY & LESBIAN HEALTH SERVICES



FALL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AT THE CENTRE

203 - 220 - 3rd Avenue S., Saskatoon - 665-1224

OUT & PROUD YOUTH

Meets every Friday at 7:30pm. A support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth and their friends.

Open to all youth 22 and younger.

20-SOMETHING COFFEE TALK

Great coffee...great talk...great people! Are you lost without a place to go for coffee & conversation?

20-Something coffee talk might be the solution for you.

Stop by, throw back a coffee or two, shoot some pool & meet new people. If you're between the ages of

21 & 29 & you're looking for stimulating conversation and good (okay, average) coffee, check us out. 20-Something coffee talk takes

place on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm, beginning September 15.

WOMEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

This thought provoking social-discussion group will grab you! Meet new people and talk about what is important to you. Come out & have fun – the Women's Discussion Group will change the way you see the world...or it might just be a great opportunity to get out of the house & meet new people. The group meets on Wednesday evenings at 7:00, beginning September 23.

MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

Are you feeling frustrated because of the lack of opportunities to converse with other gay men? Looking for an outlet to discuss your perceptions of the gay community? Well starting October 19 you'll have the option of attending the Men's Discussion Group at GLHS. Every Monday night at 7:30 you'll have a chance to converse on a topic or just sit back and enjoy the conversation around you.

OTHER SERVICES GLHS PROVIDES

We have a large listing of gay/lesbian supportive professionals and services.

Our library has a wide selection of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered books - fiction, non-fiction, poetry & plays.

Our staff & volunteers provide educational workshops on gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgendered issues for school classes and professional groups.

SPIRITUALITY DISCUSSION GROUP

As lesbians, gay men & bisexuals we often end feeling estranged from the those spiritual institutions we grew up in. Many of us have explored alternative ways to connect our spirituality with our sexual orientation. This group provides an opportunity to discuss spiritual issues in a setting that is not based on any particular belief system. This group begins meeting October 6 at 7:30 pm and will continue every Tuesday.

QUEER MOVIE NIGHTS

Every Thursday night at 8:00pm a different lesbian or gay theme video is shown at GLHS.

Come out and enjoy these movies in the company of other gay men, lesbians or bisexuals.

Sept 17 - *Late Bloomers*

Sept 24 - *Hair Spray*

Oct 1 - *Stonewall*

Oct 8 - *We're Funny That Way*

Oct 22 - *Double Impact*

Oct 29 - *Rocky Horror Picture Show*

POOL, PIE, CARDS & COFFEE NIGHT

Come out to GLHS on Saturdays from 7:30pm to 10:00pm and enjoy a game of pool or cards (bridge, euchre, hearts, go fish, or whatever), a board game (anyone for Scrabble?), and enjoy a cup of coffee or a pot of tea, a soft drink or juice. Pies or other munchies will be available. Spend the evening with friends, new and old.

POOL TOURNAMENT

Come on up to GLHS and get registered for the fall pool tournament which will begin as soon as enough people sign up. Are you Saskatoon's best queer pool player or do you just play for fun?

YOU TOO CAN GET INVOLVED IN THE CENTRE

We rely on volunteers to help with most of our programs. Call Gamet at 665-1224 to find out how you can help us meet the needs of our community.

BOWLING

Are you interested in bowling with 'family'? Register by calling 665-1224 and when sufficient numbers are signed up we'll arrange a night at the KG Bowl.

Call 665-1224 for more information on what is happening the the Centre

FUNDING CRISIS

(Saskatoon) Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) has begun a lobbying campaign with the provincial government to obtain more funding. The provincial health department has been funding the organization for the past five fiscal years but the level of funding has only grown by 2% while the workload goes up at least 25% a year.

"We've been telling the Health department for the last few years that the level of funding is not sufficient to meet the growing demands for services," said GLHS executive director Gens Hellquist. "We've finally hit the wall and can not possibly continue to provide the services we're expected to provide on the level of funding that they want to give us."

GLHS submitted a request for \$312,000 for the current fiscal year, which began April 1, 2001, but the group was notified in mid-April that they would only receive a 2% increase, bringing their provincial funding up to \$106,120.80. In the recent provincial budget it was announced that community organizations would receive a funding increase of 6% but GLHS was not even given that.

"We have to question how serious this government is in addressing the health needs of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people," Hellquist said. "When we look at the levels of funding provided to organizations working in other marginalized populations it's obvious that we're being discriminated against."

In an Action Alert that GLHS has sent out to people across the province they point out that the Health and Social Service departments provided well over \$5 million to groups working on issues in the Aboriginal community and over \$3 million to groups providing services to women. "We're not saying that women's and Aboriginal groups shouldn't be receiving the levels of funding that they get," said Hellquist. "But the gay com-

munity has similar high rates of suicide, substance abuse, etc. that exist in the Aboriginal community, yet we do not receive anywhere near the same level of funding. We're not asking for equal funding but we are asking the government to take our issues seriously."

*"We've been telling
the Health
department for the
last few years that
the level of funding
is not sufficient..."*

**-Gens Hellquist
Executive Director, GLHS**

GLHS is now operating on a provincial basis, providing training workshops and initiatives across the province. Their toll free line is receiving an increasing number of calls from rural areas even though they do not widely advertise the toll free number. "We don't have funds to advertise the line outside Saskatoon and if we did advertise we don't have the funds to pay the charges that the vastly increased number of calls would cost," said Hellquist.

In the fiscal year that just ended GLHS staff and volunteers handled 8,842 phone calls and 12,646 drop-ins. They provided anti-homophobia training and training on how to provide quality services to gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered to 1,459 people in 43 different organizations across the province. They also provided consultative services to hundreds of teachers and other helping professionals across the province and mailed out resource material to many more. "We're not aware of any other group in the community who has as many client contacts as we do," said Hellquist.

"Most community organizations also operate in a single community but GLHS is expected to provide services on a provincial basis because there is essentially no other group in the province providing the services we do," Hellquist added.

In April GLHS issued lay-off notices to four staff which essentially cuts their staff component in half. The remaining 4½ staff positions are also threatened in the future as funding for those positions comes from Health Canada grants that will expire over the next 12 months. "We will definitely have to look at cutting back services," said Hellquist. "We're not sure how we're going to be able to tell people that we can't meet their needs when we've been scrambling already to meet the rapidly growing demands."

"I think this is definitely a human rights issue," Hellquist said. "I can't think of anything more fundamental than the right to good health, but when you look at the intolerable rates of premature death caused by homophobia it's clear that we are not treated equally when it comes to our health issues. The Canada Health Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Act and the Supreme Court all say that we are equal. It's time we demand that our governments, at all levels, do what's needed to ensure that we can live healthy and productive lives. For the majority of gay people that is not now possible," Hellquist said.

GLHS has mounted a lobbying campaign to urge the government to get serious about the many health issues endemic to the gay community. They are asking people to write, call, fax or e-mail the Health Minister, John Nilson and the Premier, Lorne Calvert, along with their MLA to demand more than tokenism when it comes to addressing the health of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people as well as their families and friends.

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

"I find it rather ironic that GLHS is being seen as a national model in addressing the health issues of the queer community," said Hellquist, "but we're unable to obtain sufficient funding from our provincial government, which has the primary responsibility for the health of its citizens, to operate effectively."

Last year GLHS receive \$250,000 from Health Canada for three different projects, which is more than double what the pro-

vincial health department provided. "Unfortunately, the federal funds are for short-term projects but they did allow us to increase our staffing levels to meet the huge demands," Hellquist said. "With those projects winding down as soon as the end of July, it's impossible to continue operating as we have been."

Information on how to contact cabinet ministers or MLAs can be obtained by calling GLHS at 665-1224 or 1-800-358-1833 or on-line at www.gov.sk.ca.

NOT A PRIORITY

(Saskatoon) Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) was informed on May 17 that they would not be receiving the increase in funding that they requested of Saskatchewan Health. GLHS had requested a substantial increase to keep up with the continually rising workload they are dealing with but were informed that all they would get was a 2% increase.

In his letter to GLHS, Health minister John Nilson said his government faced numerous priorities for health funding and that the only groups that received more than a 2% increase were those working in substance abuse and mental illness areas. He pointed to the Metis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (MACSI) as one of the few groups that received a funding increase larger than 2%. According to Nilson, only groups that provided treatment and counselling for mental illness and substance abuse received more than a 2% increase.

"This is the same message that we've been getting from the provincial health department for the last three years," said Gens Hellquist, executive director of GLHS. "They increased health funding by \$230 million this year but we still don't rate as a priority with the government. It appears that our lives have little value with this government," he added.

Hellquist said it's obvious that Sask Health doesn't have a clue about what GLHS does, even though they are required to file regular reports on their programs. "Mental illness and substance abuse are two of the many issues we address," Hellquist said. "The irony of Mr. Nilson citing MACSI as a group that

received more funding is that MACSI has requested that our staff go into their agency a couple of times a month to work with clients and staff there."

Hellquist said he was also upset by the suggestion in Nilson's letter that the agency go to the district health board if they want more money. "This is an old and tiring game that the province plays. 'Talk to the health board' and, of course, the health board replies 'talk to the province,'" Hellquist said.

The Premier's office received a number of letters from voters concerned about the lack of funding provided to GLHS and the health issues faced by gays and lesbians. In his reply the Premier ended his letters saying, "Moreover, it must be recognized that GLHS clients also have access to other social service agencies."

"That suggestion again shows how little they know about the realities that gays and lesbians live with every day," Hellquist said. "There have been a number of studies in recent years that clearly indicate that gays and lesbians do not receive quality services from most health and social agencies and institutions in this country."

Hellquist said the organization's board is committed to lobbying and educating the government to see that they value the lives of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals by providing the resources to ensure they have access to quality and informed health care. "I have no trouble believing that if any other population group in the province had the same high rates of suicide, substance abuse, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, low self-esteem, etc. there'd be studies and lots of funding to address

those issues," Hellquist said. "Somehow our lives don't seem to be all that important to funders."

"It's rather ironic that the province is finally changing legislation to place our relationships on a similar status as heterosexual marriages when you consider that the vast majority of queer people are not in a place where they are able to come out and develop strong relationships," Hellquist added.

GLHS is hoping that will change after a news conference they are planning in June. At that news conference they'll unveil two studies that clearly show the need for funding for organizations like GLHS. "We've been working for two years on a report for the HIV/AIDS division of Health Canada that will call for addressing HIV prevention in the context of the broader health issues gay men face," Hellquist said. "We will also be unveiling our study that shows that homophobia costs our society anywhere between \$1.3 billion to \$7.3 billion a year," Hellquist added. "There is a slew of research that shows the need for dedicated services for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people. Hopefully Sask Health will realize the folly in their denial of adequate funding for our community," Hellquist added.

GLHS was forced to lay off four staff in May because of the lack of adequate funding. "Fortunately we've managed to find another small grant to bring back three of the four staff," Hellquist said. "However, this is only a short-term solution to a rapidly growing problem." Last year GLHS had over 22,000 phone calls and drop-ins on a wide range of issues. GLHS will also be losing one of their core staff members in June. Lori Crozier, who has worked as the administrator for the past year-and-a-half, has been hired as executive director of the AIDS organization in Whitehorse. "We'll miss her greatly," Hellquist said, "but we wish her all the best in her new adventure."

A PHENOMENAL SUCCESS

(Saskatoon) According to Gens Hellquist, executive director of Gay & lesbian Health Services of Saskatoon (GLHS), their recent national queer health conference was a "phenomenal success." The gathering, "2001: A Health Odyssey—Building Healthy Communities," brought together over 175 individuals from across Canada to network and discuss ways to address the numerous health issues endemic to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and Two-Spirit communities. Delegates were present from every Canadian province and territory except Prince Edward Island, North West Territories and Nunavut. They came from a variety of organizations including AIDS service organizations, queer community organizations, public health bodies, medical organizations and youth organizations.

"The Gathering exceeded our wildest expectations," Hellquist said. "It was the first opportunity that individuals and organizations working on the broad range of health issues in the queer community have had to gather and share information, resources and to meet one another. Participants welcomed this opportunity to meet and most left Saskatoon to return to their communities charged to bring about change."

The four-day event began Thursday evening, August 30, with an opening Meet & Greet; plenaries and workshops started the next morning. The Gathering kicked off with a welcome from Saskatoon's Mayor Jim Madden followed by an opening address by Hellquist. The remainder of that first morning was spent on discussing the determinants of health as they relate to queer people. Bill Ryan, a professor at the McGill Centre for Applied Family Studies presented an outline of the determinants of health as they relate to queer people and was followed by a panel discussion on how the determinants are applied in various settings.

In the afternoon, a series of 44 work-

shops was begun with the workshops spread out over the following three afternoons. Workshops were either 1.5 hours or 3 hours in length and covered a diverse range of health and social issues in the queer community.

*"The Gathering
exceeded our
wildest
expectations!"*

—Gens Hellquist
Executive Director, GLHS

On Saturday, the plenary keynote speaker was Michael Häusserman from Geneva, Switzerland, who spoke on efforts in that country to address HIV prevention for gay men in the context of their broader health issues. Switzerland is undergoing a similar process as Canada, which is seeing a shift away from traditional HIV prevention programs to ones that look at all the factors that must be put into play to insure gay men stay healthy. The morning ended with a panel discussion looking at new ways HIV prevention is being done in some communities.

On Sunday, Dr. Terry Tafoya from Seattle gave the plenary address and discussed the history of Two-Spirit people in traditional Aboriginal cultures in North America and how those traditions were nearly wiped out by colonization. Tafoya also discussed other issues of how sexual orientation is viewed in North American culture.

Monday morning was set aside for participants to discuss ways to pressure policy makers and funders to take the health issues of queer people seriously. "There are more gay and lesbian people who die

in Canada each year from suicide than AIDS," said Hellquist. "Yet those suicides go unnoticed and little is done to alleviate the conditions that cause people to take their own lives."

Participants approved nine resolutions calling for change. They called upon governments to provide funding for a national queer health and well-being organization that would advocate for systemic changes in government policies regarding queer health issues. They called for the development, implementation and evaluation of a national queer health promotion strategy, similar to the one developed to address HIV/AIDS issues. The strategy must be directed by queer people in partnership with Health Canada.

The Gathering also called on those responsible for the health of all Canadians—Health Canada, provincial health departments and regional/district health boards—to develop a more holistic perspective of queer health. This would require moving beyond an illness/disease focus to one that defines health in psychological, mental, emotional, spiritual and physical terms.

HIV/AIDS continues to rise among gay men in Canada and participants called for the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS to be strengthened to address it in the context of the broader health issues faced by gay and bisexual men.

Funding is always a problem for organizations trying to address health issues in their communities and the Gathering called for governments at all levels to provide adequate funding for organizations working in the queer community.

Other resolutions passed unanimously included a call for policy directives that provide for sensitive and equitable health and social services in the queer community; funding for research into the many issues faced by queer people as well re-

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

search on programs that are effective in addressing the numerous issues; programs in educational institutions and professional associations that address queer issues in their health and social services curricula; and public education programs in both the general population and within the queer community about the impact that homophobia and heterosexism have on the lives of queer people.

“We have the beginnings of a connected national movement to address the broad health issues in our communities,” said Hellquist. “In the past when people talked about gay health the only issue that came to mind was HIV/AIDS when the reality is that queer people are dying not only from AIDS but also from suicide, substance abuse and mental illness. The time is long past for governments and health agencies and institutions to address our issues. This Gathering has lit a spark that will not be extinguished.”

Hellquist said most delegates want another similar conference to occur again, preferably next year. “Securing money for such a conference will be a big issue,” Hellquist said. “This event cost in excess of \$200,000 to put on and that money was secured from a grant for the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS. It’s probably time we moved out from under the shadow of AIDS and allowed our broader health issues to come out of the closet.”

SASKATOON DECLARATION

(Saskatoon) Delegates at the recent national queer health conference, 2001: A Health Odyssey — Building Healthy Communities held over Labour Day Weekend, approved a number of resolutions calling for queer health issues to be addressed. The delegates unanimously supported the nine resolutions with a few changes suggested. Those nine resolutions were rewritten by a committee to better reflect the wishes of delegates and are now being circulated to health care officials and policy makers across Canada.

"The resolutions approved at the Gathering were compiled from recommendations in a number of studies on queer health issues," said Gens Hellquist, executive director of Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS), the Gathering organizers. "There was certainly nothing new in them. The issues are well known to those who work in queer communities.

"We hope that people across the country will present the resolutions to health offi-

cials in their areas to begin the process of better educating those responsible for health care in this country," Hellquist said. "We will be forwarding them on to Alan Rock, the federal health minister,

*"We hope that
people across the
country will present
the resolutions to
health officials in
their areas"*

—Gens Hellquist
Executive Director, GLHS

and asking him to take action on the issues presented in the resolutions."

Hellquist also said GLHS is in the process of putting together a committee with

national representation to look at further initiatives to further the work of the Gathering. "People left Saskatoon feeling a real need to stay connected in order to move the health issues of queer communities higher on the public agenda," Hellquist said. "The committee will be looking at ways to stay better connected and share resources and information across the country. It will also look into the possibility of forming a formal national coalition of organizations and individuals working to address the health needs of queer people."

Many who participated in the Gathering expressed the wish to hold a similar conference next year. "I'm not sure we'll be able to find funding to hold another national queer health gathering in the near future, but it is one of the things the committee will be looking at," Hellquist added.

The final recommendations have become the Saskatoon Declaration.

SASKATOON DECLARATION OF GLBT HEALTH & WELLNESS

The following resolutions were unanimously supported by delegates at 2001: A Health Odyssey — Building Health Communities, a GLBT health conference held in Saskatoon August 31 to September 3, 2001. They are broad based and macro in perspective to provide a beginning point in looking at addressing the health care and social service needs and concerns of Canadians who have emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender. This list of recommendations was originally culled from past grassroots-based research studies on the issues and discussed and voted on by participants in 2001: A Health Odyssey. They are presented here in a generic manner so as to encompass the numerous specified identities that make up our diverse communities; i.e. lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgendered, Two-Spirit people, queers, seniors, youth, disabled, rural and urban dwellers, their families and friends, etc. (For the purpose of this document these communities are collectively referred to as GLBT) This is not a conclusive list, nor are the resolutions listed in order of importance.

We the GLBT People of Canada:

In recognition that the Canada Health Act guarantees equity in the delivery of health services to all Canadians and in light of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in the Egan vs. Canada case where they said, "Gays, lesbians and bisexuals, as individuals or as couples, form an identifiable minority, which is still today, victim to serious social, political and economic inequities," we propose the following resolutions:

National GLBT health and wellness organization.

Funding must be provided for the formation of a national GLBT health and wellness organization that would advocate for systemic changes in governmental policies including the allotment of core funding for national, regional and local organizations, diversification of educational curricula, encouragement of ongoing research and establishment of a national clearing house of GLBT health and wellness information.

(Continues on next page...)

National GLBT health promotion strategy

The development, implementation and evaluation of a national GLBT health and wellness promotion strategy, must be undertaken and driven by GLBT communities in partnership with Health Canada and other departments, supported by significant financial resources for ensuring success. This would involve a strong and closely linked collaboration between Health Canada, other branches and governmental levels and the GLBT communities towards ensuring positive health and wellness for these communities.

Population Health & Determinants of Health

Those that are responsible for the health of all Canadians, (Health Canada and other federal departments, provincial/territorial departments/ministries and regional/district health boards) must develop a broader, more comprehensive, encompassing perspective of GLBT health as a focus. This requires a perspective that moves beyond an illness/disease-based focus (i.e. HIV/AIDS, breast cancer) to a more holistic view that defines health in psychological, mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, environmental and cultural means with documented concrete determinants of health including conditions that affirm choices of coming out. To this end the diverse GLBT communities must be recognized by health policy as distinct health populations with specific health and wellness issues and needs.

Revitalization of HIV/AIDS Prevention in GLBT Communities

In light of the alarming rate with which HIV/AIDS continues to affect GLBT communities, the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS must be strengthened and address HIV/AIDS issues in the context of the broader health and social issues that impact on GLBT populations.

Funding

All levels of government must provide GLBT communities with adequate core funding at national, regional and local levels to address the numerous barriers we face within the health and social service fields. Standards of equitable funding distribution must be established so as to include the full participation of the diverse GLBT populations.

Directives & Guidelines

Policy and funding processes concerning health and social services at all levels (federal, provincial/territorial, regional, municipal, aboriginal governments,) must develop directives that call for sensitive and equitable health and social service provision to GLBT populations including children and youth. This would include goals of correcting prejudicial attitudes through best-practice guidelines, when implementing policy and programming.

Research

Health Canada and those engaged in health research, such as the Canadian Institute for Health Research, must support continued research and demonstration projects that address health and social service barriers and accessibility issues faced by GLBT populations across the country. The voices of those who have

lived with the impact of homophobia and heterosexism must be recognized and legitimized.

Educating Professionals

Educational institutions and professional associations must include and be held accountable for GLBT issues in the curricula of their health, education and social service training to redress the historic invisibility and recognize the contribution of GLBT people, and to counter homophobia and heterosexism. The issues of GLBT people must be integrated both into the curriculum of education systems at all levels and the ongoing professional training of professionals by their professional organizations.

Public Education

Those responsible for the health of Canadians must provide resources for local, provincial/territorial and national organizations to deliver public education to both the LGBT and broader communities as to the role homophobia and heterosexism plays in negatively affecting the health and wellness of GLBT people and their families. Homophobia and heterosexism are killing us.

References

Canadian Public Health Association (March, 1998) Safe Spaces Project Report, Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth Programming: Multi-sectoral Outreach. Montreal, Quebec.

Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO). (May, 1997). Systems Failure: A Report on the Experiences of Sexual Minorities in Ontario's Health-Care and Social-Services Systems. Toronto, Ontario.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Health Association. (March, 1999). LGBT Health Care Access Project: An Overview and Analysis of Community Consultations. Vancouver, BC.

National Reference Group (June, 2001) Valuing Gay Men's Lives: Reinvigorating HIV Prevention in the Context of Our Health & Well-being. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

New Brunswick Coalition for Human Rights Reform. (March, 1993). Within Reach: Meeting the Needs of Gay and Lesbian New Brunswickers. Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Ristock, J.L. (1997) Breaking Barriers Project Evaluation. Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Ryan, B., Brotman, S. (March, 2001) Report on the National Meeting of Canadian Researchers in the Field of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Two-Spirit People's Health. Montreal, Quebec.

Ryan, B., Brotman, S., and Rowe, B. (May, 2000) Access to Care: Exploring the Health and Well-Being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Two-Spirit People in Canada. Montreal, Quebec.

HEALTH COALITION FORMED

(Saskatoon) Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) has been given the task of facilitating the development of a new national queer organization in Canada. In early February GLHS brought together a committee, with representation from all parts of the country, to discuss follow-up steps from the national queer health conference they hosted last Labour Day weekend.

At that conference delegates unanimously approved nine recommendations that called for action at all levels to address the health and social issues faced by those Canadians who have emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender. Included in those recommendations was the formation of a national organization that would connect people working on queer health issues across the country.

"We are the only population group in this country that does not receive serious levels of government funding to address our issues," said Gens Hellquist, a member of the organizing committee for the coalition and executive director of GLHS. "That has to change and this coalition will provide a strong voice to advocate for our health and wellness issues to be taken seriously," he added.

The committee members agreed to form the Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition (CRHC) at their meeting held in Toronto. Objectives were agreed on and specific areas that would be tackled first were outlined. Many details of the CRHC still need to be worked out and those more

*"We are the only
population group in this
country that does not
receive serious levels of
government funding."*

**-Gens Hellquist
Executive Director, GLHS**

specific details will be released in the next couple months.

"One of our first objectives is to secure funding for the Coalition," Hellquist said. "We will also be lobbying governments at all levels to develop policies and procedures to fund community based organizations that are working out the many health issues our communities face. We will also be lobbying for the development of strategies, such as the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS, to clearly articu-

late our issues and the variety of programs needed to address those issues."

One important area the CRHC will be working on is the education of health care professionals. "It's appalling that doctors, nurses, counsellors, social workers, etc. can get a degree in their field learning little or nothing about the realities that gays, lesbians and bisexuals face," Hellquist said. "We hope to lobby educational institutions and professionals associations to do something about that."

Hellquist said the Coalition hopes to release more specific information in early summer about areas like membership and mandate. The organizing committee has another meeting planned for May when many of those details will be hammered out.

Four weeks after the February meeting another meeting occurred in Montreal, bringing together researchers and community activists to discuss research issues around queer health and social issues. That group also agreed to form some type of national coalition although the details haven't been worked out. It's likely that the two new coalitions will have strong connections with one another.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

(Saskatoon) After three years of heavy lobbying of the provincial government, Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) has decided their only remaining option is to file a human rights complaint. GLHS has been trying to convince the provincial government that it is discriminatory to deny adequate funding to queer organizations to address the many health and social issues endemic to the queer community. At their monthly meeting October 7, 2002 the board voted unanimously to file a human rights complaint against the government.

"We believe the government is discriminating against our community," said GLHS executive director Gens Hellquist. "Government departments long ago recognized that community organizations working on issues of racism, sexism and ableism were deserving of government support but they seem unwilling to recognize the need for resources to address the impact of homophobia and heterosexism in our community," Hellquist added.

Last year the provincial government, through the departments of Health, Edu-

cation, Social Services and Justice, funded Aboriginal groups to the tune of \$8.5 million, women's groups got \$3.5 million and groups working with various disabled communities received \$42 million. GLHS received only \$108,000 from

***"We believe the
government is
discriminating
against our
community."***

**- Gens Hellquist
Executive Director, GLHS**

Sask Health this year even though they asked for \$315,000.

"During the first two years of our lobby campaign government officials told us that we weren't a priority," Hellquist said. "Now they're telling us that there is no new money for community groups even though they managed to find core fund-

ing of \$300,000 for Tamara's House. This feels like discrimination to me."

Last year GLHS completed a study of the economic impact of homophobia which showed that it cost the Canadian economy \$8 billion a year, which translate into \$240 million a year in Saskatchewan. "In light of those figures it certainly doesn't make economic sense to not provide funding to address the impact of homophobia," Hellquist said.

"The Canada Health Act, the Charter of Rights & Freedoms, and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Act all state that gay and lesbians are entitled to equality in services," Hellquist added. "That is not the case right now in Canada and in Saskatchewan."

GLHS is currently in the process of gathering information for their complaint, which they expect to file sometime in November. "We recognize that this can involve a long and time-consuming process, but we believe it's crucial to have a legally binding decision in this area," Hellquist said.

SUPPORTING AIDS

(Edmonton) A recent study out of the University of Alberta indicates that Albertans are not as conservative about HIV education and condom distribution as one would expect. The Population Research Laboratory at the university polled 1,200 Albertans 18 and over and asked their opinion about HIV/AIDS prevention issues.

"Albertans remain concerned about the spread of HIV," said Health Minister Halvar Jonson at the news conference during the release of the study. "They want to ensure young people in particular have the information they need to protect themselves from the disease."

While 97% of respondents said they know how to protect themselves from HIV, 40% said they didn't know if high school students were adequately informed about HIV transmission and another 30% felt that students weren't getting the correct information. About 20% indicated they personally knew someone living with HIV.

Surprisingly, 72% said condoms should be readily available in high school and 50% felt it should begin in junior high. 85% felt that the proper use of condoms should be taught in school with 65% believing that education should begin in Grades 7-9.

Albertans also overwhelmingly believed that frank messages about HIV/AIDS should be placed in newspapers (90%), on television (87%), on radio (86%) and on transit ads (79%).

NOTHING SHOCKING

(Regina) The Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay Health Initiative of Regina (LBGHI) has completed their survey of health service providers in Regina. The final report will be made public at a news conference later this month.

The project was funded through a grant from the AIDS Community Action Program which was administered by AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan, formerly AIDS Regina. Health providers and educators in Regina were asked to respond to a series of questions about the services they provide to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people. The survey approached 148 contacts in the city although only 58 chose to participate in the study.

"There is nothing shocking in the report," said Barb Bowditch, a spokesperson of the LBGHI. "We've always known that we have a lot of work to do in educating professionals about the health needs of gay men and lesbians."

Many of the responses seemed contradictory. The vast majority of respondents, 84%, indicated they provided no specific programming for sexual minorities while 97% believed they were comfortable in working with gays and lesbians. However, 59% indicated they had never received any training on the issues facing sexual minorities. One conclusion stated in the report was that agencies and professionals "are quite unprepared in the programming and training areas," when it comes to queer clients. Bowditch confirmed that conclusion saying, "The study confirms the magnitude of issues regarding training, resources and referrals related to sexual minorities."

Those respondents in the educational field often wanted to put the onus for the problems onto others, citing the lack of referrals available for gay or lesbian teens. Only 15% of those responding from the education system indicated they provided any information for teens who are part of peer counselling programs in the schools, even though those peer programs are often an important support system in schools. Only 54% of educators reported any training on queer is-

sués and often that training was focused on punitive actions instead of learning opportunities.

Probably the most serious area was the medical system where only one general practitioner out of 85 approached chose to respond to the survey. Fifteen responses came in from dentists and walk-in clinics. Again, responses were often contradictory. 84% said they provided gay-friendly services but only 31% had adjusted intake forms to be sensitive to gays and lesbians, with the same number taking detailed sexual history of their clients.

Respondents from the criminal justice system also indicated a lack of awareness of issues in the queer community. 74% said they used the same protocols when dealing with relationship violence issues as they used with heterosexual couples even though there are no real services available for partners in same-sex couples who face domestic violence.

Agencies and professionals who work with youth also came up short. Only 20% had coming out information available for clients and 60% admitted that sexual minority youth present special challenges. None of the five agencies who responded in this category had specific programs addressing issues faced by gay and lesbian youth. Most did not even ask questions about sexual orientation when youth came to their agency.

In their final

summary the LBGHI stated that one area of concern was how agencies stated they respond to all clients the same. "This lack of understanding could create barriers to members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual community to access services," the report says. "Fears of not being understood or not receiving service that feels safe or respectful are also possible deterrents. Many services worked on the basis of 'don't ask, don't tell,' yet when asked if there was a need for specialized services in the community, 79% believed there was a need."

"It's obvious from the survey that professionals and agencies are ill-equipped to address the problems of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals," said Bowditch. "It's clear that we have our work cut out for us."

The information gathered from the survey will be presented to the Hon. Judy Junor, the Associate Minister of Health, Health District officials and the local police service to discuss ways of implementing training and providing resources for health service providers.

SEX-TRADE BOYS IGNORED

(Calgary) A recent survey of agencies in Calgary indicated that young males working as hustlers have difficulty finding services to help get them off the street. "Society has a difficult time recognizing boys can be victims. They are supposed to be strong, powerful and sexual," says Danielle Aubry, executive director of the Calgary Committee Against Sexual Abuse. "I don't think you would find any (boy) involved in prostitution saying, 'Yeah, I did it for the sex.'"

The group surveyed 40 local social service agencies and came to the conclusion that society's attitudes are the biggest barrier to boys getting assistance to get off the streets. The recently introduced Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution laws don't see to be helping, with only five boys coming forward for help, Aubry says. Most services are female focused and not capable or willing to work with boys.

The study also concluded that the assumptions and judgments about male prostitutes that agencies operate on are unfounded but powerful determinants of what the boys will face if they approach agencies for help. Aubry says that most boys are driven to prostitution by violence or sexual abuse at home.

"The assumptions would be unacceptable if applied to girls selling their bodies," Aubry says. "It's not safe for them to come forward for fear of homophobia," she added.

One researcher hopes to do something about the problem. Dr. Sue McIntyre is applying for funding to pursue an *Albertan Study on Male Sex Workers*. The goal of the study would be to develop an understanding of the unique and often-ignored male sex trade. The study would also provide planning information for social service agencies, the criminal justice system and health services.

McIntyre hopes to conduct her survey in a number of communities around Alberta including Calgary, Edmonton and perhaps Red Deer and Lethbridge. McIntyre is looking for input from member groups in the Alberta Community Council on

HIV/AIDS as well as other interested parties.

Some of the areas McIntyre would look at include: the make-up of the male sex trade population in Alberta; how does the male sex trade compare to the female sex trade; are there unique services this population needs; demographic information on the population; what roles does sexual abuse play in leading males to the sex trade; ages of people entering and exiting the trade; and why are agencies hesitant to work with this population and quick to assign the label "sexually exploited" to females but not to males?

McIntyre is no stranger to studies on the sex trade and is currently finishing a follow-up to her project on prostitution titled *Strolling Away*, which she conducted initially in 1991-1992. That study looked at males and females in the sex trade and she was able to follow-up with 78% of those involved in the initial study.



POLITICS AND JUSTICE

Right against Rights	P36 (Oct. 21/87): 35
Gay Rights Fight Heats Up	P37 (Dec. 1/87): 3-5
Gay Wins [Glen Murray, Winnipeg]	P53 (Nov. 23/89): 7
Morality Campaign Fails [Saskatchewan]	P68 (Nov. 6/91): 8-9
Phair Elected [Edmonton city councillor]	P77 (Dec. 9/92): 12
Saskatchewan Rights [Bill 38]	P82 (July 28/93): 11
Still Fighting [right wing unwilling to accept that Bill 38 passed]	P83 (Sept. 15/93): 9
Fighting City Hall [Saskatoon]	P89 (June 8/94): 9
Campaigning Tories Bash Gays [Saskatchewan]	P95 (July 26/95): 14
Spousal Benefits: What Do We Really Want?	P99 (Sept. 13/95): 8
Interview with a City Father [Glen Murray, Winnipeg city councillor]	P103 (March 13/96): 6-7
Still No Rights [Alberta]	P103 (March 13/96): 12
City Provides Benefits [Winnipeg]	P108 (Oct. 23/96): 12
15 Years Later [Chris Vogel case in Manitoba]	P117 (Dec. 3/97): 11
An Interview with Delwin Vriend	P120 (April 29/98): 6-7
"Ha, Ha, I Win!" [Delwin Vriend legal case]	P120 (April 29/98): 11-12
Benefits in Saskatchewan	P120 (April 29/98): 13
Victory at Regina City Hall	P124 (Oct. 28/98): 9
End Run around Rights [Saskatoon City Council]	P125 (Dec. 9/98): 9
Canada's First Gay Mayor [Glen Murray, Winnipeg]	P125 (Dec. 9/98): 10
It Never Ends [Alberta]	P128 (April 21/99): 10
Joining the Ranks [Manitoba MLA Jim Rondeau]	P133 (Dec. 8/99): 10
Adoption Victory [Alberta]	P133 (Dec. 8/99): 14
Showdown in Calgary [author's experience at a Calgary Reform Party demonstration]	P141 (Dec. 6/00): 9
Gays Supported Clark	P142 (Jan. 31/01): 11
Equal Relationships [Saskatchewan omnibus bill concerning spousal rights]	P146 (Aug. 1/01): 13
Paying Its Fair Share [Manitoba]	P151 (March 13/02): 12
It's Official [Manitoba legislation]	P155 (Sept. 11/02): 20
Editorial [the gay/lesbian community and government]	P156 (Oct. 23/02): 3

RIGHT AGAINST RIGHTS

The battle lines in the fight over sexual orientation legislation in Saskatchewan are rapidly being formed. Right wing groups in the province appear to be organizing to prevent Saskatchewan going the way of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and the Yukon which have all passed legislation outlawing discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

At a conference held in Saskatoon, October 16 and 17, by Victorious Women the issue of sexual orientation legislation was a part of their agenda. Saskatchewan Pro-Life President, Tom Schuck was quoted by the Saskatoon Star Phoenix as saying that sexual orientation legislation could create "a new moral code which will say their (homosexuals) lifestyle is as good as the Christian lifestyle, "even though sodomy is a sinful act." Schuck also said, "The issue is not whether we love the homosexual - I think we all do. As Christians we are told to love and be compassionate. The issue is whether their lifestyle obtains state endorsement."

One of the main people in Victorious Women is Gay Caswell, the former PC member of the provincial legislature. Other topics discussed at their conference included pornography, day-care, education and abortion. The agenda also included discussions of the so-called AIDS cover-up.

On the other side of the battle lines, those favoring gay rights legislation appear to be less organized. The Gay Community of Regina has appointed a committee which has done some work in the area. Recently they made a presentation to the provincial government (see article elsewhere in this paper). A group in Saskatoon is holding a meeting November 11 (see calendar) to discuss the formation of a local group to lobby for gay rights. To date there is no provincially co-ordinated

lobby to lead the fight. It would appear with the well organized lobby of the right that there is a need for such a provincial lobby group to lead the fight for gay rights.

It appears that the provincial government has little if any intention of following the lead of the four other jurisdictions in Canada that have legislated sexual orientation into their human rights legislation. Bob Andrews, Saskatchewan Justice Minister has been quoted as saying that homosexuality is an affliction. With attitudes such as that the battle may be long and hard. Are we prepared for it?

Gens Hellquist

GAY RIGHTS FIGHT HEATS UP

The battle for gay and lesbian rights has come alive in Saskatchewan after lying dormant for a number of years. The gay community first began lobbying provincial governments in 1972 for inclusion of sexual orientation (as a ground on which people cannot be discriminated against) in human rights legislation but have been inactive in the area over the past few years. Gays and lesbians in Regina presented a brief to the government earlier this year which probably was the catalyst which renewed the debate. In recent weeks a variety of right wing, right-to-life and fundamentalist religious groups have become vocal in their opposition to equality for gays. The debate was kicked into high gear by recent statements from Saskatchewan's Minister of Human Resources, Grant Schmidt.

The week following Metamorphosis, the yearly lesbian and gay celebration in Saskatoon, a conference was held in Saskatoon by Victorious Women of Canada (VWOC). VWOC is headed by defeated ex-PC MLA, Gay Caswell, and is concerned about "the family". Much of their conference appeared to be dominated by their desire to prevent equality for lesbians and gays in Saskatchewan. A panel was held on the topic of sexual orientation with three speakers presenting their justifications for not providing equality for gays and lesbians. Vonda Kowslowski from the Committee To Protect The Family talked about how protection for homosexuals would threaten "the family". John Caswell, husband of Gay Caswell and an ex-hospital orderly, used his medical expertise and the book The AIDS Coverup to support his opposition to equality. In his presentation he accused homosexuals of being a group of judgemental people as well as stat-

ing that AIDS was being used as a vehicle to bring sodomy into the schools. Saskatchewan Pro-Life President, Tom Schuck, a lawyer, tried to explain how equality for gays would be discrimination against Christians.

A highlight of the conference was the presentation of awards to two individuals who support the sentiments of VWOC. Chantel Devine, wife of Premier Grant Devine, was presented the Saskatchewan Woman of the Year award for her work on behalf of "the family". Grant Schmidt was presented with the Pro Family Award by the Committee To Protect The Family. In her presentation speech, Kowslowski explained the award was being given to Schmidt because in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba gays can now adopt children and Schmidt has worked hard to prevent that from happening in Saskatchewan.

Following the conference Mr Schmidt commented to the media about his award. In an interview with CBC reporter Bob Nixon, Schmidt declared that employers should have the right to deny employment to gays and lesbians in certain jobs. The Saskatoon Star-Phoenix quoted him as saying, "Traditionally, the employer has had some say in what type of employee they hire. And it would depend on the nature of the job, how well the person was doing, and what the values of the employer might be. And an employer should still have the right to not hire certain kinds of people that they think would not be desirable." He then went on to draw an analogy between homosexuals and confirmed thieves and to say that employers should not have to hire someone who believes that stealing is not morally wrong.

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

Schmidt also expressed his belief that one could not be a homosexual and a Christian. When asked if a gay couple who consider themselves Christians should be allowed to adopt children through the government-funded private adoption agency, Christian Counselling Services, Schmidt replied, "They (Christianity and homosexuality) don't necessarily go together, and that kind of home would not necessarily be what we would consider a Christian home." He went on to say that it was a longstanding government policy that homosexuals should not be allowed to adopt children.

When Premier Devine was asked if Schmidt's comments reflected government policy, he originally attempted to toss off the furor over Schmidt's remarks by blaming the furor on a bunch of NDPers. In a later interview on CBC radio he responded that Mr. Schmidt was a lawyer and should know that discrimination was illegal. He gave no indication that his government would introduce legislation to provide equality for lesbians and gays.

The NDP have appeared confused if not silent on the issue. Initially Glenn Hagel, Social Services critic for the NDP, attacked Mr. Schmidt in the legislature for his remarks against gay people and stated that homosexuality should not be used as a reason to prevent gay people from adopting. After being confronted by Pro-Life activists in his home constituency in Moose Jaw, Hagel changed his mind. He was quoted on CBC radio saying, "It's my view that, in selecting couples for adoptions of foster homes, that couples be a man and a woman. That's important to provide the long-term security of the family relationship for the child as well as the role model that is normal to our society in Saskatchewan today." Roy Romanow, newly elected

leader of the NDP, has managed to avoid commenting on the issue. His only remarks were made while touring the province before his coronation when he claimed that he had no information on the debate and that he had no comment. Mr. Romanow was Justice Minister in 1972 when the first brief calling for sexual orientation protection was made to government and it has been a long-standing policy of the NDP party that lesbians and gays be given equality rights.

Shortly after Schmidt's remarks members of Saskatoon's gay community met to discuss ways to respond to the homophobic remarks. The Coalition for Human Equality (CHE) was formed on a Sunday afternoon and plans were made to respond to the attacks by Schmidt. It was agreed at the meeting that the time to speak out had come. The government has been attacking disadvantaged groups across the province and the recent attacks on gays was the last straw. Strategy was discussed and a steering committee was formed. A news conference to speak out was planned for the following day. (See story on page 30)

Schmidt's comments and CHE's news conference brought the issue of gay rights out of the closet and a chorus of conflicting voices began. Newspapers across the province have been running letters from people for and against gay rights. "The family" was brought out as justification to continue to deny equality to gays and lesbians. Many letters contained dire warnings about the fate of "the family" if homosexuals should get "special treatment". One writer, Isaac Block in the Star-Phoenix, wrote, "Homosexuality is by its intrinsic nature, the most anti-social, anti-human family conduct or behaviour known to mankind. Not only has it proved to bring disease and unhappiness of all kinds but, worse of all, it runs counter to all nature and would, if brought to its logical conclusion, bring about the demise of the human race due to lack of normal procrea-

tion." Many other writers used misinformation about AIDS as justification for discriminating against gays. Most of the anti-gay letters used Christianity in their illogical arguments to justify anti-gay statements.

Many of the writers expressed support for gay rights and often attempted to point out incongruities, misinformation and myths in the anti-gay letters. Star-Phoenix Forum Editor, Verne Clemence made a plea for tolerance and compassion and wrote in his column November 5, "that society does need to reaffirm from time to time, a commitment to tolerance and compassion." He also called for the inclusion of sexual orientation in human rights legislation. Other writers called for Schmidt's resignation and questioned his definitions of normality as well as criticizing him for his homophobic remarks.

The debate has raged for a month now and shows no signs of cooling down. CHE has been booked on open line shows and is making further plans. The launching of a new organization was announced November 27 to scrutinize prostitution and homosexuality. Ken Avram, a spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Association of Responsible Conduct, said that their membership of just under 100 people hasn't met yet but they have held several meetings in restaurants that have been attended by Dr. Art Hindmarsh, a Saskatoon physician, Dr. Chris Gerrard, head of the Association of Independent Church Schools, and Eldon Boldt, an official with the Circle Drive Alliance Church.

All signs from both sides of the debate indicate that this winter in Saskatchewan promises to be warmer than most.

Gens Hellquist

GAY WINS

(Winnipeg) On November 7, Glen Murray officially took office as Winnipeg city councillor and became the first openly gay councillor in that city and only the third in Canada. Murray won election to the seat by a comfortable 622 vote margin on October 25, backed by an enthusiastic, dedicated team of campaign volunteers.

Murray focussed his platform on urban reform, a burning issue in one of Canada's most densely populated city cores. Residents of the area face many housing and environmental problems and he pledges to correct some of those. As well, he is dedicated to reform of city government to create more openness. As part of Winnipeg into the Nineties (WIN), Murray was one of eight candidates who defeated incumbent councillors that were part of the "Gang of Eighteen". This caucus of councillors, mainly right wing conservatives, had a stranglehold on city policy making by voting as a block at closed committee meetings. Murray and the other WIN candidates now hope to begin to open up the government process. As part of the important Planning and Community Services Committee (among others), Murray will get his chance to make a difference on urban planning.

Murray's sexuality did not really become a campaign issue and he believes it was because he addressed concerns that matter to all his constituents and did not become a "one-issue" candidate. As a result he "gained credibility and trust amongst the voters, both gay and straight".

He also cites the hard work of his campaign group. "I'm really proud of the people that worked on the campaign", he says, and adds that he feels a "real sense of responsibility." Murray recognizes that with all the issues facing him, it will be a struggle to get gay issues onto the political agenda, but he is determined to do it. "Some of the issues are near and dear to my heart, while others are far removed from my interests", Murray said, "but I will not lose touch with the people who elected me."



Murray:

Murray is very busy winding down his job as director of The Village Clinic, Winnipeg's AIDS clinic as well as working on City Council. He will stay on as a volunteer at the Clinic, but a replacement will soon have to be found for him. The Village Clinic is the largest funded AIDS project and community clinic outside of Toronto.

Asked what his reception has been so far from the other councillors, Murray responds that it has been generally positive. He feels that he is under a microscope and is very aware of his image, but that the other councillors did not know what to expect. One councillor has talked to him about concerns that Murray would "grandstand over gay rights issues" and he laughs as he recalls how another councillor

took him aside and expressed "his concern about him (Murray) bringing a date to the City Council Christmas party."

As the glow of victory fades, Murray obviously faces a tough balancing act of being a responsible city councillor, an openly gay man, and a reformer. It will be interesting to watch how he does in the coming year.

Harry

MORALITY CAMPAIGN FAILS

(Saskatoon) Election campaigns in Saskatchewan are always hotly contested events with the "free-enterprisers" fighting to prevent the election of the "socialist hordes". The recent election, which saw a landslide victory for the NDP, was no exception. While the campaign was waged on many issues, including the record of the Devine government, economic issues, abortion, etc., homophobia was a strong element in the campaigning.

Early in the election Conservative leader Grant Devine attempted to portray his party as the only one with a moral stance. He claimed his party was the only one that wore their morals on their sleeves and the only one willing to stand up for family values. Devine's wife, Chantell, told audiences she addressed that the NDP cared less about God and family than her husband's party. She claimed her party was on the side of God because of their refusal to recognize equal rights for gays and lesbians.

Regina Churchill Downs Conservative candidate, Rev. John Bergen, inflamed the debate on morality when he claimed that homosexuals would bring about the end of society. He called for mandatory AIDS testing and suggested that restaurants should be allowed to post signs declaring their premises to be AIDS-free. According to Bergen, a fundamentalist minister, the homosexual lifestyle "is very dangerous from a disease standpoint. Anybody who has researched that lifestyle knows that syphilis, gonorrhea, tuberculosis, hepatitis, to say nothing of AIDS and a whole lot more, are being transmitted by that lifestyle, from person to person." He also claimed that many food handlers

are homosexuals and "they carry in their fingernails, in their hands, right in their very pores, things that are very, very contagious."

Bergen's homophobic statements were quickly attacked. Nils Clausen, executive director of AIDS Regina, called on Devine to remove Bergen as a candidate. "If the Ku Klux Klan wants to run a candidate like that, that's fine," he said, "But I find it deplorable when a mainstream political party chooses to associate itself with outright bigotry, hatred, discrimination and outright misrepresentation of the fact." Editorials in a number of newspapers also called on Devine to remove Bergen as a candidate but Devine refused. "I just put it (to him) this way: I might have said things a little bit differently. Just keep on going on the issues in the campaign. And he is, so we're fine," Devine said.

Saskatoon Riversdale Conservative candidate, Gay Caswell, is never one to avoid public rantings on homosexuality and she didn't disappoint anyone this campaign. Caswell, who was running against NDP leader Roy Romanow, attempted to paint the NDP as a godless party because of their support for abortion and gay/lesbian rights. Her campaign literature equated homosexuality with pedophilia and claimed that the NDP would close churches and throw pastors in jail if they preached the traditional biblical position on sexual perversion. The literature also made the claim that the NDP were "friends" of Saddam Hussein and were "objectively on the side" of the Iraqi dictator.

The largest campaign against gays and lesbians was waged by a Saska-

toon-based group calling itself the Coalition in Support of the Family. They printed 170,000 copies of a 40-page booklet entitled "The Real Issues: Where Do They Stand". The booklet, which pretended to present a fair picture of where the three parties stood on issues, was circulated across the province.

The booklet consisted mainly of excerpts from newspaper stories, past speeches made by the leaders of the three political parties and resolutions passed at party conventions. Nearly 25% of the booklet dealt with the fear of homosexuals running rampant if an NDP government were to be elected. They pointed to Ontario as an example of grave results occurring after an NDP government was installed in power. They claimed that "sweeping special rights for homosexuals and lesbians" resulted from the appointment of lesbians to the Toronto Police Commission and the Human Rights Commission and from the decision of the Ontario government to recognize same-sex couples under the government's employee benefits plan.

Devine and the Conservative party were painted as the champions of family values because of opposition to equality for lesbians and gays. Homophobic comments made by Devine and other Conservative cabinet ministers were quoted as proof of how the PCs were the moral choice. In 1988 Devine compared homosexuals to bank robbers and claimed they would not make good parents.

Speeches by NDP leader Roy Romanow and Liberal leader Lynda Haverstock, where they promised to amend human rights legislation to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination, were cited as ex-

amples of how both parties were amoral. The booklet also compared the three parties' stances on abortion, day-care, property rights, taxation of churches and the State of Israel, and in all cases the Conservatives were portrayed as the party that was pro-family and pro-moral.

Sweden was also painted as a country ruined by socialism and destroyed by "universal daycare-ism, welfare-ism, rabid feminism and artificial equality between the sexes instead of healthy complementarity." It was strongly suggested that the election of an NDP "socialist" government in Saskatchewan would lead to the total destruction that has happened in Sweden.

The Coalition is led by a Saskatoon accountant, Dale Haslett, who claimed his group was "entirely non-partisan" and not a Tory tool as many suggested. "We don't want our group as a political tool," Haslett said. He claimed his

loosely organized group didn't have memberships so he couldn't say how many people belonged to his group.

Haslett wasn't merely content to distribute his booklet. His group also purchased ad space in newspapers across the province to point out "The Real Issues" of the campaign. The ads focused solely on the claim that an NDP government would grant "special rights" to homosexuals and the only way to avoid those rights for homosexuals was to elect a Conservative government. Haslett's group also showed up at a number of NDP rallies to attack Romanow with placards and taunts that Romanow was anti-life and that he put the rights of homosexuals above those of the family.

The Conservative' morality campaign, aided by the Coalition in Support of the Family, did not gain ground during the election. Candidates from the other parties, newspaper editorials and many in-

dividuals condemned the tactics and pointed out Devine's inconsistencies in a province that has seen a huge growth in food banks and an increase in the number of children who go to bed hungry. In Saskatoon, posters with the slogan "Caswell: Your Hate Candidate" above a picture of Caswell with horns and a goatee or a Hitler moustache painted on appeared during the election. Letters to the editors appearing in many papers expressed outrage that the Conservatives would attempt to cast themselves as the party of God and the moral saviours of the province. Both Bergen and Caswell went down to defeat, capturing less than 10% of the vote, and the Conservatives were crushed in a NDP landslide victory.

During the campaign both Romanow and Haverstock publicly stated their support of equality rights for gay men and lesbians. The lesbian and gay community is now waiting to see if and when Romanow will live up to his pledge.



Michael Phair: First openly gay Edmonton councillor.

PHAIR ELECTED

(Edmonton) On Monday Oct 19 the people of Edmonton's Ward 4 saw an opportunity for change and made political history in Alberta by electing an open gay man, Michael Phair, to City Council.

Phair believes Ward 4 is truly the heart of the city. It is a diverse area that truly reflects the rich multi-cultural and socio economic centre of our city. These are the people that not only worked on the campaign but also supported him on election day. The diversity was evident as the campaign offered literature in seven different languages.

Phair wishes to open up the process at the civic level to all people, as well as minority groups, that previously felt they did not have a voice. He believes this will make the city more accessible and available to everyone. Working towards same sex benefits for civic employees is another issue that is important to Phair.

The Friends for Phair Campaign was successful for a number of reasons. Murray Billett, Phair's campaign manager, says he saw a number of similarities in the Phair campaign to his involvement in the successful campaign to elect Glen Murray to Winnipeg's city council. "When the campaign got under way here in Edmonton, we had a well credentialed candidate with integrity and courage along with a solid record of community service," Billett said. "The fact that Michael had been selected as the Edmonton Journal's Citizen of the Year spoke well to his dedication to our community. We had an outstanding core of campaign organizers and resource peo-

ple from a diversity of political and ethnic spectrums that were committed to work for Michael." Billett also said the campaign had a real sense of community support that they knew they could count on. "It is this kind of dedication and caring about the community that we live in that made Michael's election a success."

CBC Radio's *Edmonton PM* called the Phair campaign the "Best Organized" almost a "paramilitary operation". They chose the Friends of Phair campaign to profile over all campaigns in the city.

Phair and his campaign organizers wish to pass on a big thank-you to all those who contributed and worked hard for the successful campaign. "We are particularly proud of the response of Edmonton's gay and lesbian community who donated much time and money to Michael's campaign," Billett said. "Truly a group of men and women who were proud to be involved in making a difference in their city and being part of political history in Alberta." Phair has promised the lesbian and gay community that he will deliver a proclamation from the Mayor for next year's Lesbian and Gay Pride celebration.

Billett said the campaign was all about inclusion, with every community involved. "This is proof positive that when the community at large pulls together to work for change it can indeed happen. With Alderman Michael Phair on city council our city will be a better place to live. Again thank-you to all involved!"

SASKATCHEWAN RIGHTS

(Regina) On June 22 Saskatchewan became the 8th province/territory in Canada to provide protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Bill 38, to amend the Saskatchewan Human Rights Act by adding sexual orientation, family status and receipt of public assistance as grounds on which people cannot be discriminated against, was passed 31-10 by the legislature. The 10 Conservative MLAs voted against Bill 38 while Liberal Leader Lynda Haverstock, who had said during the debate that she couldn't support the Bill because it was poorly drafted, along with 30 NDP MLAs, supported the Bill. Twenty-five NDP MLAs were absent from the house for the vote including Nipawin MLA Tom Keeping, who publicly said he couldn't support the bill, and Indian Head MLA Lorne Scott, who said his constituents were opposed and he was undecided.

During third reading of the bill the Conservatives and Haverstock attempted to introduce a number of amendments to water down the bill. Haverstock wanted to have the bill amended to provide a definition of sexual orientation, " 'Sexual orientation' means the preferred form of sexual activity an adult person may choose to participate in with another consenting adult person, whether of the same or opposite sex," her amendment read. Attorney General Bob Mitchell said the government couldn't support the amendment because it failed to address people under 18 and the term "may choose" implied sexual orientation was a choice, which Mitchell said was an issue of debate. That amendment went down to defeat.

The Conservatives introduced a variety of amendments including one stating the Act didn't confer "special status" on gays and lesbians. They also introduced amendments to say the Act didn't provide a basis for courts to provide legal recognition for same-sex relationships, access to family or spousal benefits, changes to the school curriculum or adoption rights. All the

Conservative amendments were voted down.

The government itself introduced two different amendments. One stated that the Act in no way protected behaviour that was illegal under the Criminal Code. The opposition had argued that Bill 38 would be used to protect people engaged in incest and pedophilia. This government amendment was passed. The government also introduced an amendment to a clause that mandates the Saskatchewan Human

*"It's about time.
We've been waiting a
long time for this."*

Rights Commission to carry out affirmative action programs. The amendment would have removed all categories except race, colour, sex, disability or ancestry as grounds for affirmative action programs. The amendment was ruled out of order by the Speaker who said it went beyond the scope of Bill 38.

The debate and battle over gay rights in Saskatchewan is far from over. Dale Hassett, spokesperson for the Coalition in Support of the Family, said his group intends to continue with their petition to force a non-binding referendum on the issue. Hassett claims his group has already collected 50,000 of the 100,000 names needed for a referendum. He told reporters that MLAs who voted for the bill would come to regret their decision. Mitchell has said the referendum would cost \$3 million and be a waste of time as the government would not change their mind on the need for protection against discrimination for lesbians and gays.

"It's about time. We've been waiting a long time for this," Evanna Simpson of Regina's Equality For Gays and Lesbi-

ans, said. She also added that public attitudes need to change before gays and lesbians are really accepted by society. "We realize our lives aren't going to be any different tomorrow than today, but there will be a little bit more ease," she added.

Don McNamee, from Saskatoon's Coalition for Human Equality, said he was pleased with the amendments after a 19-year fight. McNamee said his group would sit back and get their breath before deciding which issue to tackle next. "We need to address the whole question of whether it's OK to be gay or lesbian if you're under 18," he added.

Many on both sides of the issue are expecting the next battle ground to revolve around spousal benefits. Saskatchewan's Act contains clauses pertaining to employment rights and contracts that many believe protect same-sex relationships in benefit plans and insurance policies. The issue is complicated by the refusal of Revenue Canada to recognize pension and benefits plans that provide benefits to same-sex spouses.

Donna Greschner, chief commissioner for the Human Rights Commission, says she doesn't expect to be flooded with complaints from lesbians and gays. "There is still a fear, I think, about coming forward, and our complaints are typically public. You have to identify yourself, and for people whose families may not know that they're gay or lesbian and who fear other negative ramifications, they have less willingness to come forward," she said.

The debate may also arise soon in the legislature. Bob Mitchell, after the defeat of his amendment to ensure gays and lesbians don't qualify for affirmative action programs, announced that his government would likely introduce another amendment to the Human Rights Act to ensure that affirmative action programs were only instituted on the basis of race, colour, sex, disability and ancestry.

STILL FIGHTING

(Regina) The battle over Bill 38, which amended Saskatchewan's Human Rights Code to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, is far from over. Right-wing religious groups are still attempting to have the changes overturned.

In late July Hugh Owens, Saskatchewan president of the Christian Heritage Party, filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission claiming the Bible now amounts to hate literature because of the amendment. In his complaint Owens cited passages from the Bible that condemn homosexuality and some that he claims call for homosexuals to be put to death. "If that's not hate literature, then what is?" Owens said. He added that protection for lesbians and gays undermines the freedom of religion provisions in the Code.

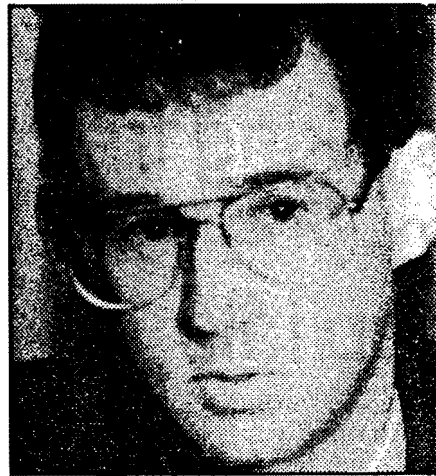
Section 14 of the code prohibits publication of words that expose a person or group of persons to ridicule or hatred and the recent amendments added protection against discrimination for lesbians and gay men to that section.

Owens doesn't want to have the Bible declared hate literature but rather to have the amendments overturned. He claims the code provides for freedom of conscience, religion and expression in one section but contradicts that in Section 14.

In late August chief human rights officer Bill Rafoss wrote Owens rejecting his allegation that the Bible is hate literature. According to the Commission the key is not what is written in the Bible but rather how people interpret it and the context in which they use their interpretation.

"Different individuals and religions interpret the Bible in different ways. Some interpret the Bible quite literally, while others seek symbolic truths from its teachings. We cannot accept the publishing or display of the Bible violates Section 14," Rafoss said.

University of Saskatchewan constitutional law expert Doug Schmeiser thinks Owens might have a point. He said freedom of religion comes before protection from discrimination against gays and lesbians. Schmeiser said Saskatchewan's Human



Dale Hassett: Won't give up.

Rights Code cannot override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees freedom of religion.

Owens announced September 9 that he will be going to court to have the Bible declared legal under Saskatchewan law. He said he was worried that pastors would go to jail if they preached certain passages in the Bible. Owens is running as a candidate for the Christian Reform Party in the Regina Wascana riding in the upcoming federal election.

The Coalition in Support of the Family also haven't given up their attempts to have the amendments reversed. Shortly after Bill 38 was passed Dale Hassett, Coalition spokesperson, announced that his group would gather 100,000 signatures to force a non-binding plebiscite on the issue.

The Coalition took out newspaper ads in 35 Saskatchewan papers with a copy of the petition, circulated it to churches throughout the province and took it door to door to get signatures. Hassett recently acknowledged that he doesn't think they have gathered the required number of signatures. He said they will count those they have already and then launch the next stage of the campaign shortly.

FIGHTING CITY HALL

(Saskatoon) The Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee in Saskatoon doesn't agree with the slogan "You can't fight City Hall." This year the Committee decided to ask City Council to proclaim June 26 as Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. This was the first occasion since 1973 that the community has asked for a proclamation for Pride celebrations.

Saskatoon's City Council has a habit of issuing proclamations for just about anything and some council meetings will see up to six different proclamations being made by council. In the past few months they have issued proclamations for Purchasing Month, Records Management Week, Sleep/Wake Public Awareness and Quilt Week. Earlier this year they even proclaimed an Anti-Discrimination Day.

The Committee wrote council to ask to be allowed to make a formal presentation and request the proclamation. Council agreed and the committee appointed Gens Hellquist to make the presentation. On May 9, Hellquist, with a hearty band of lesbians and gay supporters, most proudly wearing their queer T-shirts, went to the council meeting.

There were four requests for proclamation on the agenda that night. The Committee was second in line after a group of World War II veterans made a request for We Remember Week. After the veterans' representative had spoken about the sacrifices so many veterans made fighting for freedom, Councillors Morris Chernesky, Mark Thompson and Paul Mostoway followed one another to their feet to state their support for the proclamation. Each took the opportunity to speak about how much they appreciated the veterans sacrificing to fight for the freedom of all Canadians in Europe. Council voted unanimously for the proclamation.

Hellquist was on the agenda shortly after and told city council about the importance of this year's celebration of the Stonewall Riots and their significance to

the lesbian and gay community. He asked council to issue the proclamation and recognize the contributions that gays and lesbians make in all areas of the city. Councillor Kate Waygood moved that the proclamation be issued and Donna Birkmaier seconded the motion. The Mayor hurriedly called the vote and pro-

"I was shocked and hurt by council's decision."

claimed it a five to five tie and informed the audience that the vote had failed on a tie. There wouldn't be any proclamation for Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. Councillors Birkmaier, Waygood, Peter McCann, Glen Penner, and Marshall Hawthorne voted for the motion and Councillors Thompson, Chernesky, Mostoway and Owen Mann, along with the Mayor, voted against the proclamation. Councillor Bev Dyck was absent from the meeting.

Immediately after the proclamation was turned down, Thompson was on his feet expressing his concern about the number of requests for proclamations that go to council and said he wanted the matter to be referred to a closed door meeting of council. The following two requests for proclamations were granted unanimously by city council. In their following meeting they agreed to issue six more proclamations for special days, weeks and months.

This was only the third time since 1973, when council refused a request for a pride week proclamation, that council has refused any request for a special proclamation. In 1989 they refused to proclaim National Planned Parenthood Week and in 1990, Public Ownership Awareness Week.

Hellquist told reporters after the meeting

that he was confused why council wouldn't recognize the gay and lesbian citizens of Saskatoon when they have issued hundreds of proclamations. He said council's refusal to issue the proclamation was just an example of the hate and intolerance that faces lesbians and gay men. He added that council's actions perpetuated that hate and results in social problems like families splitting apart when a member is discovered to be gay or lesbian and a suicide rate among gay and lesbian teens at least three times higher than in the general population.

"I was shocked and hurt by council's decision," said Dik Campbell of the Pride Committee. "It appears that Saskatoon's City Council considers quilts of more importance than gays and lesbians."

Councillor Paul Mostoway, the only councillor who has spoken up publicly about the issue told reporters that it is a democracy and he can vote anyway he wants. He was later quoted in the *Star Phoenix* as saying "rubbish" when asked about Hellquist's comments about hate.

Ten days later, following a two-hour meeting, the Pride Committee agreed it was important to send the message that they were hurt by councils' actions and agreed to file a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. The complaint was filed and accepted by the Commission. The Pride Committee has agreed to attempts at early resolution of the complaint by the Commission. They are still waiting to hear back from the city about whether they are interested in trying to resolve the issue quickly. Councillor Waygood also served notice at the last council meeting that she is bringing forward the motion again. The Committee is waiting to find out if there will be a proclamation for Lesbian and Gay Pride Day on June 26. Celebrations will go on whether council issues the proclamation or not.

CAMPAIGNING TORIES BASH GAYS

(Melfort/Leask) During this summer's Saskatchewan election campaign, the Progressive Conservatives moved even farther to the right in their failed campaign to regain seats. Many candidates followed leader Bill Boyd's example of preying on some voters' discontent by targeting any minority group as the source of the province's problems. The candidate for Melfort, Bill Ripley, used a pamphlet from the Coalition in Support of the Family for campaign material. This organization, headed by Dale Hassett of Prince Albert, has often attacked gays and lesbians using gross distortions and misinformation in pamphlet campaigns and their monthly newsletter, *Saskatchewan Insight*.

The pamphlet used in the campaign was more concerned with the non-Tory candidates than "anti-family" groups like gays and lesbians but we were mentioned. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission was chastised for spreading "propaganda" about "blatant and offensive les-

bian issues". Linda Haverstock, the Liberal leader, was said to have "extreme" moral views opposing the family while Premier Romanow was guilty of "regularly mocking traditional values and morality."

Ripley was using the pamphlet in his campaign because he felt that his party "has a greater sense of the family" and the people of Melfort support such moral issues. The pamphlet's author, Dale Hassett, said his organization doesn't endorse any particular party but published the pamphlet to "generate discussion of the real issues" Hassett added, "I'm talking about the moral value issues that affect our families".

Not all PC candidates approved of the use of the pamphlet as campaign material. Prince Albert Northcote candidate, John Fryters, was "not endorsing or distributing (it) nor has it been authorized by my campaign team." He went on to say that voters "are intelligent enough to find out their own answers from (candidates) running for office, rather than going by information that might not be accurate."

The other candidates from the P.A. riding were less generous in their views of the pamphlet material and the organization behind it. NDP candidate Eldon Lautermilch said "my only comment is Dale Hassett has no credibility with the electorate. I ignore people of his ilk. This material won't have any impact on the election." Liberal Phil West said, "The pamphlet annoys me because its an oversimplification and distortion of a complicated series of issues," he added, "Its a scurrilous little rag as far as I'm concerned."

PC leader Bill Boyd gave tentative approval of the material by saying that family value issues were not a big part of the party's campaign but he would not control what material his candidates used. He wasn't sure if using the material was an endorsement of Dale Hassett's views or vice-versa but that "we look for support in every area and if they are supportive, that's fine," Boyd said.

Boyd did show that he definitely supported the Coalition's opposition to gay/lesbian rights in one of his campaign promises. Repealing the two year-old legislation that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation would be an aim of his government. He explained his position saying "There is, I believe more than enough legislation on the books to deal with discrimination." His point was "supported" by one of the two dozen Leask area farmers who came out to hear him who complained "When I'm told I can't refuse to hire someone of that lifestyle or I can be prosecuted, that hurts. I don't want them on my place."

Boyd further explained his dislike of the protective legislation by explaining "because its wrong." He also feared that gays and lesbians would adopt children. He also modified his promise with the observation that "sometimes it's difficult to repeal that kind of thing. But if we think it is possible, we will," he said.

Boyd's party barely survived the election. Bill Ripley was not one of the survivors, coming in third.

SPOUSAL BENEFITS: WHAT DO WE REALLY WANT?

by Barry W. Dixon, R.M.A.

A lawyer friend of mine and I have discussed this issue on numerous occasions. His position, and I must agree, is that if we in the gay and lesbian community are not unified in specifically defining just what "spousal benefits" means, how can we hope to achieve it. Does "spousal benefits" mean that we are seeking a whole new set of rules to apply to gay and lesbian relationships, or does it mean that we are seeking merely to have the existing method of recognizing marriage apply to gay and lesbian unions? Now that I have posed the question, I will share my view. Hopefully it will spark some discussion in the homosexual community. I will not use the word "queer." Goodness, how I loathe that term!

I believe that the existing method of recognizing marriage should and must be extended to homosexual unions. In making this statement, it must be made clear this carries with it enormous responsibilities on the part of gay couples. It would subject us to the rigours of the Matrimonial Properties Act: We should have to sue for divorce should our relationship fail. In some instances we will even find ourselves entering into prenuptial agreements to protect our property and pensions should our marriage fail. In spite of the downfalls I have mentioned, I firmly believe that a new set of rules for recognizing our relationships is not needed.

How can the current Marriage Act work? There is an interesting debate brewing in

the United Church of Canada about getting out of the business of performing marriages, and getting into the business of blessing the union of couples who have been legally married in the eyes of the state. This position has broad ramifications for the gay community. Since, in fact, the state sets the legal requirements to enter into the holy state of matrimony—and the rules to end the holy state of matrimony—all the Church actually does is bless the union of the couple.

By having a church merely bless the union of a married couple, it removes the religious dogma from a marriage. Should a church, of any faith, strongly believe it can not sanction a gay marriage, it has merely to refuse to bless the union. The church's refusal would not impede the right of any couple, straight or gay, to marry; all marriages would be civil. I assure the gay community that as a legally appointed Marriage Commissioner for the Province of Saskatchewan, were it legal to do so, I would have no qualms about performing gay marriages. When that day comes, I do hope you will call on me!

What of other benefits? For example, pension benefits? My own pension, The Saskatchewan Municipal Employees' Superannuation Plan, advises me that it can not extend spousal benefits under the plan to gay partners, as to do so would contravene the Income Tax Act. I pointed out to the lady to whom I was speaking, who will remain anonymous, there were already individual pension plans recognizing gay partners which must have found a way through the Income Tax Act. I suspect the real reason my pension plan does not recognize gay part-

ners has a lot to do with its definition of spouse (and little to do with the Income Tax Act). That definition is as follows: "A spouse is (a) a person who is married to the employee, or (b) if the person is not legally married, a person of the opposite sex whom the single employee was cohabiting as a husband and wife continuously one year prior to the relevant time." Having just read the definition, you must agree that if a gay couple were married there would be no problem. I advised the lady at S.M.E.S.P. that one day, in the not far off future, should I find someone to replace my late partner, Ray, the plan would have a serious battle on its hands. Hopefully, our governments will have extended the right to make use of the Marriage Act to gay couples, effectively ending any need to battle through the courts for basic rights.

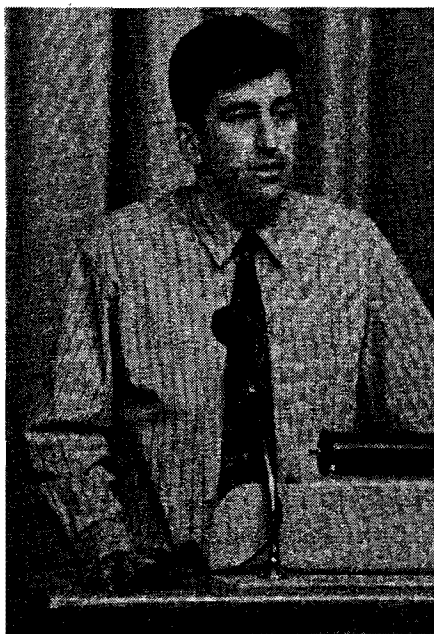
So just what does the gay and lesbian community want? Let's get our shit together and quit squabbling amongst ourselves over the petty issues. Of course, to some, the right to adopt children is important. However, once we've taken care of legal marriages, one of the primary reasons used against us in the matter of adoptions—that being that gay relationships are not normal—no longer applies; legally married couples can adopt. Besides, just who the hell says a gay couple can't raise a heterosexual child? I personally find it offensive for straight couples to claim the right to raise homosexual children, while at the same time denying gay couples the opportunity to raise heterosexual children. Myself, I'd rather have a dog! Not for a partner, mind you, just a pet. Never met a dog I didn't like. I really can't say that about kids.

I trust this article will stir up some controversy. That was my intention. Get off your ass and get united behind the important issues. And remember, when I get my way and we are allowed to marry, you'll need a lawyer. I, for one, will insist on a prenuptial agreement to protect my farm, and my pensions, should the marriage fail! *

Glen Murray has been interviewed for *PERCEPTIONS* twice before, back in 1989 when he was first elected to Winnipeg City Council, and then in 1992, upon the release of the documentary *A Kind of Family* which portrayed his relationship with his foster child, Michael.

PERCEPTIONS: You mention that Doug Wilson is a role model for your own life, who are some of your other role models, and how do you feel about being a role model for others?

GLEN MURRAY: Scared! It's very strange for me, I had parents who had a lot of trouble, especially my father, accepting the fact that I am gay, but who've, especially my mother, become loving and who've always tried to work through their differences, their kind of courage that they taught me growing up, was really important. There are two people who I would attribute the actual personal challenge to do what I have done. One is a fellow named Jim Crowley, who died of AIDS soon after I met him. He asked me a question, as he was closing out his life, "What are you going to do with your life, what if you only had the amount of time that I had, and you were counting it in days, you died right there, what would they put on your tombstone?" I was in public relations for Canada Post at the time. He said, "For you that sounds like a wasted life, why don't you do something you want to do? What are the five things you want to do?" I told him I want to see human rights legislation that included sexual orientation; I want to be a parent; I want to be a city councillor one day, I want to see an AIDS project get off the ground in Winnipeg; and I want to see a pride day. He told me to do those things. How did I know that it was possible or not unless I tried to do them? I realised that the biggest obstacles to doing things in life usually is yourself and your history, living your life for your enemies rather than yourself. Michelle Forest is the other person I would credit as a role model, a woman who is now my assistant, who told me that I was wasting my life. "Let's work on these plans you have together." She's one of the few people in my life, other than my partner Rick, who I feel totally loved by. She's one



Glen Murray speaks at the 1996 Doug Wilson Award Ceremony in Saskatoon.

of those people who give a gentle spirit of love, who helps you to love yourself in the dark spaces we all have where we are afraid to discover things about ourselves.

P: It's always inspiring to see ordinary people do extraordinary things. I had thought up until now that you were this amazing, strong-willed person who did one thing after another, and now you say that you have a whole network of people that you work with. What would you say to people who perhaps don't have that network available to them, to the rural person who wants to impact their community, or the single farmer who lives a quarter section over from their parents and is closeted? What is the most important thing that they can do to make a difference where they are?

GM: I think coming out is important, that doesn't mean telling another person that you are gay, but realising for yourself that you are gay, coming out to yourself, and acknowledging that, having an honest relationship with yourself. Apply the coming-out-to-yourself to others, to those you love, and develop a network of friends. Be able to allow being gay to be part of your life, have the courage to live an integrated life.

P: You mentioned earlier that you intend to

run for Mayor of Winnipeg in two years, that is a very big risk. Is that because you don't want to become too comfortable, or is it that you thrive on challenge?

GM: I'm at a point in my life where the boat isn't rocking any more, the water is very calm. I have a wonderful job, and a great career, and if I get too comfortable, I look for a challenge. It (running for mayor) has always been in the back of my mind. This is a real time for reflection, there's a better chance than not that I will run for mayor next election, although it certainly is not a final decision. That same network of friends will help me make the decision. It's a big risk to lose, I don't want to lose an election. I don't want to be the first out gay person elected in this region, and then re-elected with a large majority. You don't want to take the risk, you have a responsibility to the whole community, gay and straight that supported you to continue to be successful. One of the successes in politics is electability. If you lose, then there will always be the suspicion that you diminished the electability of gay and lesbian people by losing.

P: How does all this affect relationships you have with people, especially your partner? Being elected to public office is usually more than a full time job, does all the work and being a public figure put extra pressure on a relationship? How do you cope with it?

GM: Rick is the only man who has ever been able to put up with me. He has such a life of his own, he was in the navy for several years, and now he is working on a nursing degree, has a degree in outdoor recreation and has travelled all around the world, and he also has his chef's papers. He's extremely organised, extremely intelligent, very focused, and has a very different life than I have. I am extremely chaotic, extremely disorganised. As public as my life is, his is that private. We've always kept our home life pretty together and out of the spotlight. He's a huge support to me. I am the crazy person in the relationship, I'm the entertainment, he's the organisation. He's very good about things, he's just a very good, generous person, and doesn't have a big ego. He doesn't feel overwhelmed or

threatened because my life is very public and he ends up being Glen Murray's partner. Fortunately our circle of friends is very welcoming and treat us together and separately with equal respect and value.

P: Michael is in jail in Edmonton right now. He is an adult now and being treated strictly as an offender. In the years that you have been an activist, and then on city council, and from your long relationship as a foster father to Michael, what can be done to address the underlying causes of his anti-social behaviour? How can society respond better and more effectively when dealing with offenders with incidences of horrendous abuse in their pasts?

GM: Michael is the victim of horrendous abuse, as a child, he was forced to have sex against his will literally at gun point. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent on Michael on incarceration, you throw that money away. Or you can spend ten percent of that amount, that should have been spent when Michael was 10 years old, so he can get past these issues so he can grow up to be the responsible adult that we would all like him to be, that he would like to be himself. The system is anti-child, inherently blaming, and criminalizing what is essentially a health problem.

P: You can build a bridge or you can build a wall when dealing with people. In a society if we are evolving, we build bridges, do you agree with that?

GM: I agree with that largely, we live in a very hostile political environment, there's a lot of right wing councillors that I'd like to build a wall around, in the sense that they don't leave much room for trust. We have elevated some very nasty people to positions of great power and influence, its not just the Pat Buchanan's and Brian Mulroney's, there are lesser known tinpot dictators, people that if you build a bridge to, then they run across it and burn down your house. The Mike Harris' of the world maybe should be locked in a box. People like Harris, and Ralph Klein, and in his day, Grant Devine, should be a great inspiration to us all to remain vigilant and committed to explaining our point of view. The one thing that we must realise is that they have developed great political skills, they have been good communicators, and we haven't

kept up to them.

P: You can't deny that the religious right is a very formidable opposition, from the little church out on the prairie sending money to right wing causes to the highly organised religious networks in the U.S. How should we as a community respond to them?

GM: Straight people need more variety in their lives, and that means we must be visible to them, as gay and lesbian people, especially after AIDS, and after the attacks on civil rights not to develop a bunker mentality or a sense of heterophobia, become isolated, letting the Pat Buchanan's and Jerry Falwell's influence us unduly.

Glen Murray stands as a prime example of what dedicated, compassionate people can do to effect change in society for the betterment of both gay and straight people. His work in Winnipeg is proof of that. In the last Winnipeg civic election, he recorded an 81% majority vote, the highest ever in Winnipeg politics. *[2]*

STILL NO RIGHTS

(Edmonton) The Alberta Court of Appeals ruled February 23 that the Alberta government does not have to amend the Individual Rights Protection Act (IRPA) to include protection from discrimination against gays and lesbians. The 2-1 split decision overturned a lower court decision that said the Act must be interpreted to include protection against discrimination for gays and lesbians.

The case was started by Delwin Vriend after he was dismissed from a religious college in 1991 when it was discovered he was gay. Vriend attempted to lodge a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission but was unable to do so because the IRPA does not list gays and lesbians in the groups that are protected from discrimination. Vriend then took his complaint to the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench where Madam Justice Anne Russell ruled that the Alberta code was in conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it didn't protect lesbians and gays from discrimination.

After much heated debate, the provincial government appealed Justice Russell's decision. Many in government were expecting to lose the case and were hoping that the issue would then just go away. Others

thought they should just accept Justice Russell's decision and do nothing.

In his ruling Mr. Justice John A. McClung said judges should not be making decisions that are the responsibility of legislatures. "Alberta's legislative calendar must be set by the elected representatives of voting Albertans, not outside agencies," Judge McClung wrote in his ruling. "Rightly or wrongly, the electors of the province of Alberta, speaking through their parliamentary representatives have declared that homosexuality... is not to be included in the protected categories of the IRPA," he added.

In his ruling Justice McClung also said gays and lesbians were treated no differently by the IRPA than heterosexuals because neither group was mentioned in the Act. "No protection is afforded by the legislation to heterosexuals which is simultaneously denied to homosexuals," Justice McClung wrote.

Justice McClung angered many in the gay and lesbian community by his repeated linking of homosexuality with morality. Vriend's lawyer, Sheila Greckol responded to the ruling by saying, "I would say this is not a red-letter day for our Alberta Court of Appeals. I think in all legal quarters but the

Alberta Court of Appeal the issue of homosexuality is not an issue of morality. It's one of human rights."

In her dissenting opinion Madam Justice Constance Hunt said she was in agreement with the lower court ruling that omitting sexual orientation from the Act placed it in violation of the Charter. Her suggested remedy was not to read sexual orientation into the Act but rather invalidate offending sections. She would then give the legislature one year to amend the Act so it conforms with the Charter.

She also disagreed with her colleagues and wrote that the Act clearly does not protect gays and lesbians as much as heterosexuals. "To argue that the (law) treats Vriend in the same way as others is to ignore the most fundamental elements of this case—it is as a result of his homosexuality ... that he is being treated differently."

Some people were pleased with the ruling. Tom Wakeling, a lawyer who represented two intervenors in the case, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and Focus on the Family, said he agreed that voters should decide the issue.

Vriend said his heart fell when he heard news of the decision. "I don't think I've felt all I'm going to feel yet," he said. "I think I'm just numb." He added that he felt angry that he lived in a province where he can be discriminated against because he is gay.

A few days after the decision was handed down, Vriend announced he plans to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. He has until April 18 to officially file his notice of appeal.

Murray Billett, a spokesperson for the rights group Gay and Lesbian Awareness (GALA), said it was clear that Vriend had been fired because he was gay. "It's shameful and embarrassing that in 1996 the government of Alberta has forced a basic equality issue to the highest court in the land." Greckol said Vriend could find himself before the court by fall.

CITY PROVIDES BENEFITS

(Winnipeg) Same-sex employees who work for the City of Winnipeg are now entitled to benefits under that city's benefit plan. The change in policy was approved by the mayor and her executive policy committee in September and was later approved by city council. The policy change has been championed for some time by Councillor Glen Murray who is openly gay.

Winnipeg gay activist Chris Vogel said it was ironic that council would agree to provide benefits to same-sex employees when Mayor Susan Thompson has consistently refused to proclaim Pink Triangle Day of Lesbian and Gay Pride Day. Vogel said the Mayor has also been issuing proclamations for days related to AIDS. "She likes those who are sick and dying," Vogel added.

The City of Winnipeg has been a respondent in a number of complaints to the Human Rights Commission about their refusal to provide benefits to employees in same-sex relationships. Public health nurse Horst Backe filed his complaint seven years ago when his partner's claim for \$80 in dental work was rejected. "The key issue is equality," Backe said. "It seems that some employees are valued less than others."

The motion, which was not debated, passed with five councillors in opposition. "It was the usual number of obnoxious stupid jerks who brought up the usual number of stupid questions," Vogel said about the councillors who voted against the motion.

The new policy provides dental care, vision care and family and bereavement leaves but doesn't deal with issues of pension benefits. Councillor Murray asked the executive policy committee to reconsider its position on extending pension benefits. Mayor Thompson said there was no way council would consider the pension question adding that she could not support such a change until she had received information on the potential cost to the city.

15 YEARS LATER

(Winnipeg) One of Canada's longest fights for lesbian and gay rights appears to have finally reached its conclusion. On November 24 a Manitoba Human Rights Commission (MHRC) adjudicator ruled that the provincial government had discriminated against Chris Vogel by refusing to allow him to obtain benefits for his male partner.

Vogel has been fighting since 1982 to have his partner included in his employer's benefit plan. Vogel works for the province so his victory means that all provincial government employees are now entitled to same-sex spousal benefits. The ruling will also send a strong message to all employers in the province.

"This decision was long overdue," said Vogel. "No employer will have a basis to discriminate against anyone anymore." The ruling results from 15 years of fighting that has involved numerous hearings and appeals. Government employees will now be able to receive health and dental benefits along with vision insurance for their same-sex partners.

However, the ruling does not provide for the inclusion of same-sex partners in their pension plan. "The adjudicator of the MHRC decided it was outside his jurisdiction to tell the federal government what to do with the pension plans," said Vogel. Federal regulations do not allow same-sex partners to be registered in pension plans and to date the government has refused to amend regulations to bring them in line with other spousal benefits won by gays and lesbians.

Harold Gilleshammer, the provincial labour minister responsible for the MHRC, indicated his government will not appeal the decision and is willing to abide by the adjudicator's ruling. "We don't like it, but we'll abide by their ruling," he said.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DELWIN VRIEND

by Garnet Woloschuk

Delwin Vriend was fired from his teaching job at King's College after refusing to voluntarily resign when his homosexuality became known. This event in his life became the catalyst for his Supreme Court case against the province of Alberta because of their refusal to include sexual orientation in the Individual Rights Protection Act.

Perceptions: The decision by the board to fire you was not supported unanimously by college faculty and students. Is there still support for you at the college or has this changed and how?

DELWIN VRIEND: A lot of the support I believe I got from the student population was because of two reasons. One, I think they respected me as a teacher and felt comfortable with me. And two, they were upset they had no input into this situation. They had no idea this was going on through the whole year. I was instructed by the board and the president that it was not to be discussed. No one was to know what was going on behind the scenes. Looking back, I think I should of said, "Why would I adhere to that? You're going to fire me anyway." I was trying to be diplomatic. So when I was fired it came as a big surprise and a lot of people were angry because they did not know this was happening. Now most of the students do not know me personally. There has been a lot of misinformation and a lot of students [attending the college now] believe that, and I'm not sure where they get their information from, like that I was talking about being gay in the classroom all the time. I think a lot of that misinformation is because of the college's policy which they developed to fire me which stated that the practise and promotion of homosexuality is not consistent with their mission. The fact that the students did not know I was gay until I was fired is a good indication I was not talking about it.

P: In the gay and lesbian community there seems to be two main responses to handling religious views of homosexuality. One response is often an undercurrent of anti-religious sentiment and a strong opposition to Christianity, while another seems to be a decision to totally avoid the discussion of religion in hopes of avoiding a heated debate. What is your opinion of this and how do you think the lesbian and gay community should handle the controversial topic of religion and morality?

DV: Well, I think in a lot of ways I'm not sure that it is necessarily the gay and lesbian community's responsibility to deal with the religious aspects of things. I'm not interested in getting into a debate with religion just because it's not where I'm at but I figure if people want to do that it is completely fine and that is their right. I think most religions can coexist with a person's sexuality but that's my opinion. When it comes to morality issues I think there is no one morality. I

firmly believe everyone's morality is different and for me to say that Christians must accept homosexuality is just as wrong as Christians saying that gay individuals must make as many efforts as possible not to be gay. I don't necessarily think it is the responsibility of the entire gay community to stand behind everything that everyone in our community feels important. My court case is something important to me and a number of people in various gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities. However, a lot of people are very secure in their employment. A lot of people are very secure in their housing situation and forcing the government to change laws so that everyone is secure may not be top priority on their minds. In their minds maybe religion is more important and that is fine. I cannot say to them you should be a staunch supporter of this court case just like I do not feel they should be

able to say to me you should be a staunch supporter of gays and lesbians being open in a particular religious environments.

P: A fund has been established to help you with your case and people have been recognized for their contribution to your legal battles. I would like to give you an opportunity to comment on your support system throughout this ordeal?

DV: The fund was set up almost immediately after I was fired. Gay and Lesbian Awareness (GALA) wanted to get involved and one of the ways they did this was to organize an number of community organizations to get together to form a committee to get a fund set up which would be responsible for fund-raising and so on. My first lawyer moved so I switched lawyers and that is the other actual source of support that we have got. The law firm Chivers, Greckol & Kane and in particular the lawyer Sheila Greckol, who is a very prominent constitutional lawyer, took this case pro bono. So we are not paying them any of their fees. All we are paying are disbursement fees, which still adds up to an enormous amount of money. We are still looking at fifty to one hundred thousand dollars for the Supreme Court case. In the Supreme Court we had 19 lawyers on our side, all of whom were not being paid for their time. People from the Canadian Jewish Congress, United Church, Canadian Labour Association, Trade Unions, even the Canadian Bar Association got involved and the Canadian Federation of Human Rights Commissions. The amount of support we got for this case has been tremendous both from the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities as well as the straight and business communities.

P: After Judge Anne Russell's ruling in 1994, where she stated that "sexual orientation" must be read into the Individual's Rights Protection Act (IRPA), there was talk of the Alberta government invoking the "notwithstanding clause." Have they ever followed

through, and if not, do you anticipate them taking that measure to prevent rights for gays and lesbians?

DV: It was a sad day in Alberta recently because the Alberta government decided to invoke the "notwithstanding clause" in another case. I was flabbergasted and most Albertans were outraged so the Alberta government decided not to invoke the "notwithstanding clause." One opinion is that Klein did this so that he could, when my case came up, say to the Alberta people look the last time you reacted this way there is no way we are going to invoke the "notwithstanding clause" again. The other opinion I have heard voiced is that if they can do it once then they can try it again. I think Canadians would and should be outraged if Alberta uses the "notwithstanding clause." The very fact that this clause was meant for the use of Quebec in order to include them into the constitution signifies to me that it is not meant to be used on a whimsical basis. When we do not want to do something we need to do we're just going to say "notwithstanding?" I think that makes a mockery of federalism and Canada.

P: You are going to speak at a conference called "Breaking The Silence: Gays & Lesbians in Our Schools" talking about the importance of inclusive human rights for teachers and students. Could you briefly touch on some key points of that presentation for our readers?

DV: I think for teachers inclusive human rights legislation is vital and when I say inclusive I mean every visible and invisible minority. The classroom is the second and probably sometimes the first major influence in a person's development and without inclusive human rights for teachers people are not exposed to other minorities. I've always said that hatred, bigotry, intolerance and discrimination always hinder coming out. On the other hand, coming out, meaning being visible, hinders that hatred, bigotry, and discrimination because suddenly there is a face and you realize there is a human being you're dealing with here. If a teacher cannot be open in the classroom, then how do we expect students to be open in a classroom?

P: You'll also be speaking at the Doug Wilson Awards regarding your suit. Doug Wilson and you share a similar experience of being

denied jobs in education because of your sexual orientation. Was that part of your motivation for speaking at the awards? Do you think much has changed since Doug Wilson's battle in the mid '70s and your fight for human rights?

DV: I think it is very important this talk be given especially at an awards ceremony such as this because twenty years ago Doug Wilson faced this situation and twenty years later we are still dealing with it. Now granted I'm dealing with this in the province of Alberta which is the last province that will change its legislation. So yes, we are the last province but still even the province of Saskatchewan did not change their legislation until five years ago and we find ourselves twenty years later still fighting the same battles. Legislation gives some protection but it does not prevent discrimination, hatred, bigotry and negative feelings towards different groups that come through education. So it is a very important area to be involved in and I think we can be very thankful that people like Doug Wilson were doing this how many years ago. They were definitely the originators of a lot of the battles we have had in Canada.

P: Any last comments or something we might of missed that you

would like to mention?

DV: Albertans are very strange in a lot of ways in their feelings about Saskatchewan because they always see Saskatchewan as a conservative place and I don't. I think that is one thing I have always appreciated about Saskatchewan. Despite it being a very agricultural, rural province there is definitely a sense of justice here and the very fact the government willingly changed their legislation without forced intervention, where the Alberta government still won't after seeing all the writing on the wall change their legislation voluntarily. I think that speaks highly of the people of Saskatchewan and I think it speaks poorly of the people in Alberta. When a province in population smaller than Alberta can react proactively, make changes to their legislation to make sure their population is being treated fairly, that speaks volumes and Alberta should be ashamed. [2]

[This interview was conducted prior to the Supreme Court decision. See story in News Prairies. Ed.]

*"If a teacher cannot be open
in the classroom, then how
do we expect students to be
open in a classroom?"*

-Vriend

"HA, HA, I WIN!"

(Ottawa) A court decision forcing civil rights protection for the gays and lesbians of an entire province is big news. For this to happen to Alberta, a province called "Canada's Colorado" by some activists, is enormous news.

Delwin Vriend's seven-year battle with the Alberta government ended on April 2 when the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled that the province must protect gays and lesbians from discrimination.

Vriend's comments immediately following the Supreme Court judgement included simply, "Ha, Ha, I win," and "Shame on you Ralph Klein, shame on you [treasurer] Stockwell Day. You had until this morning to do the right thing, and you demonstrated to the very end that you are not a government of the people. You are a government against the people."

The Court ruled, in part, that the Alberta legislature cannot claim to be neutral regarding sexual orientation by simply omitting it from the Alberta Individual Rights Protection Act (IRPA). The Supreme Court found that the province is practising harmful discrimination without justification in violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court then ordered that sexual orientation be read in to Alberta's provincial laws as a protected category, effective immediately.

Mr. Vriend's seven-year battle began when King's College asked him to resign after learning of his sexual orientation. He was then denied recourse by the Alberta Human Rights Commission who said his complaint is not covered by IRPA. In 1994 a provincial court ruled that Alberta's human-rights laws are inconsistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The province appealed the provincial court ruling to the Alberta Court of Appeal, which, in 1996, ruled 2-to-1 that IRPA doesn't exclude gays just because it doesn't mention them. Delwin Vriend then marched onward to the Supreme Court of Canada which ultimately ruled that IRPA must read

in rights for gays and lesbians.

This "reading-in" is thought to be the middle ground between the two more extreme options of either striking down the provincial law altogether on the one hand, or on the other, simply declaring it unconstitutional and giving the Alberta legislature time to repair the flaws. The judgement provides the means to immediate action for the many sexual orientation discrimination cases pending in Alberta.

Subsequent to the high court decision, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein announced that he would not seek legislation to override the Supreme Court using the so-called notwithstanding clause in the constitution. The notwithstanding clause gives provincial legislatures the means to override a decision by the Supreme Court. It was used in Quebec to enforce French language rights over the objection of the Court, and more recently, was nearly used in Alberta by the Klein government to deny constitutional legal rights to people who were forcibly sterilized in the days of Alberta's eugenics laws. Some legal observers feel it was the intense public backlash against the recent attempt to invoke the notwithstanding clause in Alberta that kept the Klein government from trying to use it in the Vriend decision.

Klein himself could be considered a moderate in the issue of same-sex rights, and was quoted recently saying, "Had the courts not written into our law the decision, that was the No. 1 option [inclusion of same-sex rights into IRPA] that our caucus was considering and we were going to act on that immediately anyway."

No doubt speaking without the backing of his premier, Lorne Taylor, an Alberta Tory legislator, said, "It's my personal opinion that as a government we must take a look at the notwithstanding option." An even more harsh and ignorant opinion was offered by Randy Thorsteinson, leader of Alberta's struggling Social Credit Party who offered this comment, "This decision will eventually legitimize paedophiles. Their argument will rest on this decision; they will argue

that they can not be discriminated against because of their 'sexual orientation.'" Not to be outdone, the spokesperson for the Alberta Federation of Women United for Families had this to say, "The whole way society looks at families will change. Nothing at all can be said against homosexuality, if it is promoted or if our children are recruited, they will be specially protected."

For his part, Premier Klein is sickened by the intense backlash and hysterical demagoguery recently evidenced in Alberta by some of its citizens and leaders.

Opponents of the Supreme Court decision embarked on a province-wide media campaign to try to sway the premier into taking action against the ruling by using the notwithstanding clause. Klein said, "I abhor discrimination. We have people writing letters that quite frankly make your stomach turn." Klein's office ran out of paper for its fax machines after a deluge of complaints by religious fanatics. Klein added, "It's been the law now for almost a week and the world is still standing."

The Canada Family Action Coalition meanwhile was busy distributing flyers which say the Vriend decision forces the Alberta government to, in their words, "promote homosexuality."

The Alberta government spent \$95,000 to put announcements in all the province's daily and weekly newspapers to give the public the facts about the Vriend decision. The first announcements were published April 15.

Commenting on the controversy in Alberta, federal Justice Minister Ann McLellan said the Supreme Court did nothing outside the powers it was given by the provinces and Ottawa when the constitution was signed in 1981. "For anyone to suggest that the Supreme Court is doing something that it was not specifically empowered to do, is simply not accurate," she said.

Anti-gay groups in Alberta say they object
(continued on next page...)

(continued from previous page...)

to the ruling fearing that it is the thin edge of the wedge, and that the decision will lead to broader implications than simply protection of gays and lesbians. With one voice anti-gay bigots are saying that the decision will lead to the acceptance and legal protection of paedophiles.

Murray Billet of Gay and Lesbian Awareness said he doesn't accept the broader implications argument. "Either you believe in discrimination or you don't and you obey the law or you don't," Billet said.

Openly gay Edmonton city councillor Michael Phair was in tears as he related how he received angry and hateful calls after the Vriend Ruling. Phair had been pushing Edmonton City Council to declare a gay pride day. "Some of the things that have been said are so ugly and so vitriolic I can't believe at times I live in a civil society," Phair told reporters. Coun. Phair held a press conference on April 8 after receiv-

ing a death threat by phone while he was at City Hall. Phair said, "The province needs to end this destructive discussion. This is not debate. This needs to be named for what it is. This is a witch hunt. I've been told that I should be shot, and other gays and lesbians should be shot, that I should have never been born, and that there's no place in this province for people like me." One caller suggested that Phair be dismembered.

The April 2 ruling by the Supreme Court will have implications outside of Alberta. It is thought that the judgement will speed the inclusion of protection for gays and lesbians in the human rights acts of Prince Edward Island and the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Vriend, who is now a computer technologist with the University of Alberta, has dropped plans to pursue his original complaint after being fired from King's College. "The most important part of this battle is now over. We have the legislation in place according to the Supreme Court. That's as far as I'm going."

BENEFITS IN SASKATCHEWAN

(Regina) Provincial government employees in Saskatchewan with same-gender partners now have access to the same health benefits as opposite-gender couples. The change in policy goes back to last September, but was only made known to government employees and the public last February.

The new policy was introduced with little fanfare in a memo circulated to all government departments. The memo is from John F. Curran, director of compensation branch of the Saskatchewan Public Service Commission. In part the memo says, "Benefit plans were amended effective September 30, 1997 to remove the gender restriction for common law spouses for the purpose of coverage under the Group Life, Dental and Extended Health Plans. The benefit plans will consider unmarried persons in a long term relationship to be the equivalent of spouses under the plans."

The memo is worded vaguely and contains no specific reference to same-gender couples. It must be read carefully, and more than once, to garner the actual message contained in it.

The change in policy was hastened by a 1996 human rights complaint filed by Kerry Armbruster-Barrett, who at the time was working for the Saskatchewan Securities Commission. The complaint was directed against the Public Employees Benefits Agency (PEBA).

Spokesperson for PEBA, Roy Schneider, said, "It's an administrative thing and is old news. The provincial government also wanted to ensure its policies were consistent with its human rights legislation."

Gay and lesbian activists province-wide are asking why, if it is just an administrative thing, did the province force Mr. Armbruster-Barrett to launch a human rights complaint, and why did they deny his spouse benefit payments in the first place? The matter for the couple was resolved in a closed-door settlement last year. Since the settlement was arrived at via a human rights commission board of inquiry ruling, it was not binding on future complaints of a similar nature. However, the settlement had implications for all same-sex couples in the province's civil service, and the formal announcement amounts to an admission by the Romanow government that it was wrong to deny the Armbruster-Barrett's spousal benefits in the first place.

Donna Scott, chief commissioner for the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, had this to say about the decision, and the change in policy: "It shows that there is a recognition that denial of same-sex benefits is considered to be discriminatory on the basis of sexual orientation. Employers in this province should be aware that this is the trend in the law—that same-sex partners are entitled to the same benefits."

VICTORY AT REGINA CITY HALL

(Regina) The dust has settled and the way has been paved for Lesbian and Gay Pride Week to be proclaimed by the Mayor of Regina in the summer of 1999. Not all the members of Regina City Council are happy campers, and some of their constituents will probably complain publicly when the proclamation is made, but our community has won another victory.

This all started in the summer of 1998, when the Regina Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee asked Regina City Council to make a proclamation for our week, which was held at the end of July to avoid conflict with other events. The Pride Committee was told that a city bylaw, passed in 1990 when the same request was made before, prevented the Mayor from making proclamations which would be politically, religiously or sexually controversial. According to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and the Regina City Solicitor, however, this bylaw (as it had been applied) became out of date when a clause that outlaws discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation was added to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code in 1993. Therefore, according to all available legal advice, the city bylaw needed to be amended.

Most members of the Pride Committee attended the Regina City Council meeting of August 24, when an amendment to the bylaw was to be put to a vote. This process could have been quite and dignified. However, the proceedings were dramatically interrupted by Fred Hill, the most powerful patriarch of the Regina business community, who was accompanied by his lawyer. Hill, through his spokesperson, asked City Council to table the discussion on this issue until he could present possible alternatives to the amendment. Not all council members were present anyway, so the Mayor tabled the discussion until the meeting of September 21.

Meanwhile, the media had caught wind of the conflict. Several members of the Pride Committee had their fifteen minutes of fame on radio and TV. While waiting for City

Council to make a move, the Pride Committee had filed a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission against the *Regina Leader-Post* for printing a collection of Biblical passages (including the notorious statement from *Leviticus* that men who lie with other men should be put to death) sent in by Hugh Owens, who had sent the same material to the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* in the previous year. Eventually, the Human Rights Commission informed us that the Regina newspaper did nothing illegal when it printed passages from the Bible. The management of the *Leader-Post* showed its true colours when it ran an unsigned comment on the editorial page that praised Regina City Council for doing everything possible to legally avoid proclaiming Lesbian and Gay Pride Week at any time in the future.

The City Council meeting of September 21 was a circus. The Pride Committee's presentation was followed by speech after speech by homophobic groups, mostly religious (Christian and Islamic), urging City Council to break the law, if necessary, to avoid giving legitimacy to the likes of us. One presenter asked whether a proclamation of Lesbian and Gay Pride Week would be followed by Prostitutes' Week and Paedophiles' Week. Another presenter suggested that a "pride week" for us, proclaimed by the Mayor, would be as pathetic as a "pride week" for anorexics. This presenter claimed to have great sympathy for us, and he hoped we would get well soon.

After all the presentations had been heard, a motion was made to rescind Section 37 of the Regina city bylaws. Wiping out this section, which deals with proclamations, would have prevented the Mayor from making any proclamations for anyone at any time. The final vote on this motion was to take place at the October 5 meeting of City Council. One councillor, Bill Gray, told the waiting TV reporters that he was not trying to deprive the gay community of our rights, but that he had a "right" to vote against allowing us to get our proclamation. He proudly claimed to be a "homophobic."

The Pride Committee sent a letter to all the groups that had had proclamations made in the past year, asking them to express their concerns to City Council and to attend a brief rally to be held in front of Regina City all just before the meeting of October 5. Several groups responded by sending letters to City Council, urging this body not to rescind Section 37.

October 5 was a rainy day in Regina, but this did not prevent a crowd of about eighty people from attending the rally. Several speakers, including Barb Byers (head of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour), Regina MLA Joanne Crofford (Ms. Crofford asked not to be identified in any other way), and City Councillor Fred Clipsham, spoke out against homophobia on Regina City Council and everywhere else. Mirtha Rivera introduced the speakers and incited anti-homophobia. Her image, megaphone in hand, appeared on the front page of the next day's *Leader-Post*.

The City Council meeting that followed the rally was almost entirely devoted to the proclamations issue. The Pride Committee made a new presentation, followed by supporting speeches by individuals and representatives of various groups, including liberal churches. This time the homophobes were outnumbered. Several city councillors desperately argued that abolishing all proclamations was the lesser of two evils. Several councillors, including Mayor Doug Archer, pointed out that this was not the case. Archer diplomatically urged his fellow councillors to preserve proclamations in general and remove the existing obstacle to the proclamation of Pride Week. By a slim majority, they did.

END RUN AROUND RIGHTS

(Saskatoon) In 1994 the Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee filed a complaint with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) over the refusal of Saskatoon's City Council to issue a proclamation for Pride Week. That complaint has languished in the Commission ever since.

The SHRC has been attempting to negotiate a settlement for nearly four years now but little progress has been made on the issue. "We have made offers to settle the complaint," said Gens Hellquist, spokesman for the Committee, "but either the Commission or the City has said the terms we asked for were not acceptable. We have never received an offer from the City indicating what they were prepared to offer to settle the complaint.

Hellquist added that all three parties bear some responsibility for the delays in reaching a settlement. "We will assume our responsibility for the delays we caused because one of the co-complainants has left town but the City often took months to reply to our terms," Hellquist added.

On November 30 City Council took unilateral action and passed a resolution in council as an attempt to settle the complaint. The City will donate \$2,000 to the United Way "for distribution by them to an appropriate group to promote non-discrimination against gay and lesbian people in Saskatoon, and/or assist the victims of such discrimination." Council also placed a notice in the Dec. 5 issue of the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* where they said, "We, the City of Saskatoon, wish to publicly state that we are opposed to discrimination against gay and lesbian people. We wish to make clear that discrimination in all its forms against any citizen is unacceptable in this city. It is our goal as a City Council to build a tolerant community where all citizens can live in peace and safety."

Hellquist said he didn't find out about the City's plan until the Friday before the vote was taken. "The only inkling I had that something was afoot was when a message

was left for me by a reporter with a local radio station," he said. "I then phoned the Commission to learn that they had received a letter that morning from the City indicating that they planned to take unilateral action on the complaint."

"I was angry and appalled that the City would sidestep the settlement process at the Commission to impose their own terms," Hellquist said. "In our four years of negotiations through the Commission the City never once made any offer to settle this complaint. All they did was refuse to negotiate the terms we requested saying they were 'punitive and not remedial'."

The City also served notice that they would fight any attempt to send the matter to a Board of Inquiry, the usual process that occurs if the Commission is unable to reach a mutual agreement with the two parties. In a letter sent to the Commission on the Friday before the vote, City Solicitor Theresa Dust said the City "reserves the right to rely on all its defences, including delay, in the event that this matter proceeds to a Board of Inquiry." She also indicated the City would enter "the report in evidence."

"I have to wonder why the City chose to take this action instead of presenting their offer through the Commission," Hellquist said. "And why is the City paying \$2,000 to the United Way for work around homophobia instead of giving that money to Gay & Lesbian Health Services who are the organization that does most of the work around homophobia in Saskatoon. It appears to me that the City doesn't want to deal with lesbians and gay men."

Hellquist acknowledged that the makeup of City Council has changed substantially since the 1994 refusal of the proclamation and that the new Council has made proclamations every year since 1994. "The 1994 refusal sent a strong message about gays and lesbians not being seen as equals in Saskatoon," Hellquist said. "The 1994 Council also amended the policy around issuing proclamations, as a direct result of

the request by the Pride Committee for a proclamation, effectively neutering that policy. If City Council is indeed concerned about homophobia and discrimination in Saskatoon, their recent action does not reflect that concern as far as I'm concerned. It seems more like an attempt to get rid of a problem without adequately addressing that problem," Hellquist added.

No decision has been made yet on whether the Pride Committee will go forward with their complaint through the Commission. It may be difficult for the Commission to continue with the case now that the City had taken an end run around the process for settlement.

CANADA'S FIRST GAY MAYOR

(Winnipeg) On October 28 Glen Murray made history when he became the first openly gay man to be elected mayor in Canada. Murray, who has spent nine years as a Winnipeg councillor, beat his closest competitor by 10% of the vote.

Murray's win made the headlines across North America and other gay politicians like MP Svend Robinson and Toronto councillor Kyle Rae were quick to congratulate him. Robinson attended Murray's victory celebration in Winnipeg while Rae sent a congratulatory bouquet of flowers.

While homophobia was not a major issue in the campaign, it did rear its head on occasion. Murray's main opponent, businessman Peter Kaufmann, frequently reminded voters of his wife and family. Local talk radio shows frequently aired nasty discussions about Murray sexual orientation. Murray also received threatening phone calls on election day and was escorted to his victory party by police. However, by the next day Murray had shed his police escort.

"It's proof that our city is an inclusive, hopeful and positive place," Murray said about his election. Murray also said he was not about to stop attending events like Pride celebrations in the gay community. "I'm not going to behave any different than before," he said. "Even the mayor has the right to have fun."

Murray also acknowledged that he won't speak solely for the gay community. "I now speak for 660,000 people," he said referring to the population of the city of which he is now mayor. "Being gay doesn't have a lot to do with sewers and taxes."

When asked what it will be like to be a gay mayor, Murray responded, "There's never been an openly gay mayor in Canada before, so I guess I'll be the first to find out."

Murray wasn't the only openly gay or lesbian person in Winnipeg to be elected on Oct. 28. Both Lori Johnson and Kristine Barr, who are open lesbians, were elected to Winnipeg's school board. Johnson has been elected to the board before while Barr won for the first time. Barr campaigned on a pledge to fight for more services for lesbian and gay youth in Winnipeg.

IT NEVER ENDS

(Edmonton) The debate over equality for gays and lesbians continues unabated in Alberta. After refusing to include lesbian and gay relationships in the new Domestic Relations Act, the Klein government has suggested they will establish a registry where non-married couples can register their relationship. Many see this as an ill-advised attempt to avoid more costly legal battles although gay and lesbian activists in Alberta have promised that it will not have the desired effect.

In March, Justice Minister Jon Havelok announced that the cabinet had agreed to enact a law which would establish a domestic partner registry as is used in some European countries. "It allows same-sex couples to register their relationship, which creates certain financial and other obligations between them and that would be enforceable," said Havelok.

Murray Billett, a spokesperson for Equal Alberta, a gay rights advocacy group, said the announcement did not go far enough. "It's important to us that the people of Alberta understand that we want the same choices, the same opportunities as everybody else," he said.

Equal-Alberta (Edmonton) is a group of concerned citizens working to ensure gay and lesbian Albertans remain protected under Alberta's Human Rights Legislation and are offered the same rights and privileges granted to all Albertans. In a statement issued by the group in March they

said, "In April 1998 the Government of Alberta struck a four-member cabinet committee to 'erect fences' around Alberta legislation and to consider ways to contain the implications of the Vriend decision. Rec-

***The Klein government
has suggested they
will establish a
registry where non-
married couples can
register their
relationship.***

ommendations or legislation may be introduced and the Not Withstanding Clause invoked during the upcoming spring session concerning such issues as adoption, pension benefits, spousal support and marriage regarding gay and lesbian Albertans."

"We are concerned this process will prevent further development of Equal Rights for gays and lesbians in this province. We need to ensure that the voices of all concerned Albertans are heard," the statement went on to say.

The group has called on all gay and lesbian Albertans to educate themselves about the many issues relating to lesbians and gay men. They are encouraging people to respond to the government's request for in-

put from Alberta citizens.

Equal-Alberta has identified a number of areas where the government is looking at "erecting fences" to prevent further equality for gays and lesbians in the province. These include spousal support issues, adoption issues, same-sex pension benefits and same-sex marriages. The organization has prepared position papers on the issues that are available to anyone interesting in joining the battle for equality.

Equal-Alberta can be reached by calling (780) 488-3234, faxing (780) 482-2855, or by e-mail at equalalberta@hotmail.com. Information can also be found on their website at www.frenet.edmonton.ab.ca/glcce/equal.htm.

Some other policy statements brought to light by the Klein government are: provincial school curriculum will not promote homosexual relationships; sex education curriculum will be decided by local school boards with help from parents and school councils; employee benefits for same-sex partners will be left up to employers — including the provincial government — and their employees to negotiate; Alberta will amend its current ban on gay or lesbian foster parents by considering "what is in the best interests of the child" (they did not say how that would be determined); and the government opposes gays and lesbians adopting children who are permanent wards of the Crown except when it's in the best interests of the child.

JOINING THE RANKS

(Winnipeg) During the recent provincial election, Manitoba became the latest province to elect a gay member to the legislature. In an interview with Winnipeg's gay publication *Swerve*, NDP MLA Jim Rondeau acknowledged that he is gay.

Rookie candidate Rondeau narrowly won his Assiniboia riding in the election. On election night it appeared that he had been defeated by two votes by former Conservative cabinet minister Linda Macintosh but after two recounts he was declared the winner by three votes.

Rondeau doesn't like being labelled an openly gay politician. "I am a politician who is gay, not a gay politician," Rondeau told *Swerve*. "I'm not openly gay but I'm not in the closet," he added. "I don't hide what I am... I'm not embarrassed. If I was straight, I wouldn't advertise it either." When asked about his orientation during campaigning, Rondeau was candid in telling people that he was gay and in a relationship.

"I didn't run on gay issues. I ran on health care and treating people fairly," he said. "Sure this includes gays... I would fight against race discrimination as hard as I would against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation because it's wrong. I stand up for what's right."

The new MLA has been in a relationship

with another man for 8 years but he believes details about his partner is nobody business. "Before the election, my partner and I discussed the whole aspect of political life. The agreement was that politics was my activity. He's a quiet, shy person who doesn't like the political

*"I am a politician
who is gay, not a
gay politician."*

—NDP MLA Jim Rondeau

smoozing... but he's out and his employer knows."

Prior to being elected to the legislature, Rondeau worked as a financial planner. He has also worked as a teacher and school administrator where he created and designed educational programs. He was also an activist on HIV/AIDS and literacy issues while he worked in Northern Manitoba.

Rondeau said he ran for elected office because "I want to make a difference. I was able to do that on an individual basis or on a smaller level, but now I'm meeting decision-makers and as an MLA I'll be able to achieve greater results." He went on to say that he has always been a social activist working from the outside

looking in, but now he will have more power to influence change by being on the inside.

In the past Rondeau was certainly not an NDP insider. He purchased his party membership only six months before the election. However, he was open with the party about his orientation from the start and disclosed it on his nominations forms. He chose to run for the NDP because he believed that they are the political party with a social conscience and care about small business and people.

Rondeau joins a small group of openly gay or lesbian politicians elected in Manitoba elections over the past year. Winnipeg elected openly gay city councillor Glen Murray as mayor last year as well as lesbian Kristine Barr to the public school board. Barr joined openly lesbian trustee Lori Johnson on the board. Rondeau said the election of openly gay people to political office in Manitoba hopefully means that society is finally maturing when it comes to sexual orientation issues.



ADOPTION VICTORY

(Calgary) Two lesbians couples, and their children, are celebrating after winning a ground-breaking court case that allows the non-biological partners to adopt the children they have been part of parenting since their children's birth. "We're elated," said one of the victorious women who were not named in the court case in order to protect the identity of their children. "This is an absolutely big justice issue for the sake of our kids," she added.

The two lesbian couples went to court after the non-biological partner was refused the right to adopt their partner's biological child. The Alberta government fought the adoption process for 18 months but in May did an about-face and changed provincial legislation allowing for step-parent adoption by same-gender couples. However, that legislative change did not affect the two women who applied before the law was changed.

Mr. Justice Peter Martin, of the Court of Queen's Bench, said the two women were "amply qualified" to adopt their partner's child. "I am also satisfied that these applications are in the best interest of the children," Martin said in his ruling.

Julie Lloyd, a lawyer for the gay and lesbian advocacy group Equal Alberta, said the victory would be helpful in some areas of family law, adding that gays and lesbians would still probably have to go to court to have the 60 pieces of legislation changed that discriminate against same-gender relationships. "It's entirely unfair to put the burden on the lesbian and gay community to effect these changes

particularly since the courts have been so clear that the changes need to be put in place," she said.

When told about the decision, the five year old boy of one of the couples was ecstatic. "Now we have a real family," he shouted.

Not everyone in Alberta was happy with the decision. Hermina Dykshoorn, president of the Alberta Federation of Women United, said there would be a storm of angry calls and letters making their way to the elected politicians. "This will be tried in the court of public opinion and most Albertans will be opposed to this," she said.

In his ruling, the judge ordered the government to pay the \$300,000 worth of court costs.

"This government seems to be unable or unwilling to recognize that they shouldn't be discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation," said the women's lawyer Gary Courtney.

SHOWDOWN IN CALGARY

by Steve Gin

It's not every day you're called a "pervert," a "freak," and "brave" — all in the space of ten minutes. Welcome to the world of Election 2000.

When Stockwell Day's election machine rolled into Calgary for its first visit, a playwright I know phoned me and asked me to join a downtown demonstration.

I agreed immediately. I've witnessed years of political attacks on gays and lesbians in this province: our government fighting the Vriend Decision, which would ensure only the most basic protection in housing and employment; opposing gay adoption; opposing arts funding to lesbian and gay arts groups; establishing the "fences" committee, which would forever bury the specter of gay marriage. And behind much of this rhetoric was then-provincial treasurer Stockwell Day.

None of this prepared me for what I encountered as I quietly walked the line with a handful of other protesters. "Pervert!" "Freak!" Without even bothering to know anything about me, people chose to jeer, label and taunt me.

"Baby-killer," came another accusation. "How could you vote for that baby-killer Chrétien?" I checked the placard I was carrying; nowhere did it say anything about my stand on abortion, or who I was voting for. Only that it wouldn't be Alliance Party of Canada.

A French journalist slipped behind me—most others were occupied with getting their precious sound bite, or capturing the image of the day. "You're very brave," she whispered. "You're very brave to be here today." I thanked her, but no, I said, not really. It would be cowardly to be anywhere else.

There was ugliness, but there was humanity in the crowd as well. I spent close to 20 minutes speaking with a woman who couldn't understand how anyone could be "born that way," and feared that her grandchildren were being taught to be gay in school. It's hard to argue against those misconceptions; the best I could do was tell her about the wonderful man I have spent five happy years with, how I've known since I was seven years old that I was gay, and how as part of a couple, my partner and I are happier, kinder, better human beings. "But what about my taxes," she argued. "You people want to take all of my taxes for your same-sex benefits. That's not right." I smiled. "You know, I pay those very same taxes, and they benefit people like you. And you know what? I think that's fantastic. I think you've earned it."

It wasn't the answer she expected. In the end, I think maybe we parted friends. "Well, maybe you're one of the real homosexuals, one of the good ones," she confessed. Not quite the conquest I'd hoped for, but a start. She left promising she would phone a

number I had given her, the parent of a gay child, someone who could tell her more about heartache and redemption than I ever could.

Another man, a kindly face who could have easily been my grandfather's, squared off to debate me as well. And although we couldn't agree, somehow we reached through to something human in each other. "You're a very nice young man," he said as he left. "Not at all what I expected."

What he expected. What I expected. This small showdown taught me a great deal about the labels and assumptions we make about each other as human beings. As I was about to leave, a father and son stepped in my path. "Hey faggot! You're a fucking disgrace. You're going Hell. You're gonna be turned into a pillar of salt."

I looked my aggressors in the eye, and wondered if I was seeing the same gaze Matthew Shepard saw in the last few minutes of his life. Where once I might have only recognized hate, I also recognized fear. Fear of what, I'm still not sure I'll ever understand.

Politely, I excused myself. I could hear others confronting the people I marched with. They were indeed a small number compared to the teeming mass of Alliance supporters. We had lost the battle, but not the war. Somewhere in that sea of rhetoric and false assumptions, I had reached out to two people who didn't know me, who didn't understand me. And they to me. And that made it all worthwhile.

Steve Gin is a professional actor and museum educator who lives in Calgary with his partner, Don. He is the founding artistic director of Crazy Horse Theatre, a contemporary Aboriginal theatre ensemble, and is the current co-artistic director of Teatro Berdache, a gay and lesbian theatre company in Calgary. □



GAYS SUPPORTED CLARK

(Calgary) There has been much talk over the past few years about the power of the gay and lesbian vote in elections. Up to now there haven't been many places where the gay vote appears to have been a factor in turning an election around. That certainly changed with the election PC leader Joe Clark in Alliance territory.

At the start of the election campaign, Clark wasn't given much of a chance to unseat Alliance MP Eric Lowther, but the tide started to turn midway through the election and Clark won handily, beating Lowther by over 4,000 votes. Most pundits believe Clark's victory came because of a large turnout of lesbian and gay voters who supported Clark.

While Clark was campaigning nationally as the leader of the PC Party, his wife, Maureen McTeer, was visiting gay and lesbian bars and attending receptions hosted by gay individuals. Before the election writ was dropped Clark was persuaded to run an ad in the local gay publication *Outlooks*. The ad had the caption "Not Just Another Pretty Face" above a smiling Clark. It also contained a phone number for the Pink Triangle Working Group.

Long-time gay and AIDS activist Brian Huskins lead the campaign to get gay and lesbian votes for Clark. Huskins, who is running as a Liberal candidate in the next provincial election, encouraged Clark's campaign to run the ad and court the gay vote. Huskins was also instrumental in getting a number of prominent Liberals to come out publicly for Clark.

"I knew he [Clark] was following his heart and this wasn't just a political thing for him," Huskins explained when asked why he was abandoning the Liberal candidate Joanne Levy to help Clark get elected.

Huskins turned his home phone number into an answering machine for Clark and started building a list of gay and lesbian supporters. "I built my list one name at a time, with people I talked to, and people who called the ad," Huskins said.

As the campaign continued, support for Clark continued to mount in the lesbian and gay community. Clark was a hot topic of discussion in Calgary's gay bars and at gay and lesbian events. Calgary Centre contains a large number of gay and lesbian voters and all the city's gay and lesbian commercial establishments are situated in the riding.

"I know for a fact many, many gay and lesbian people who don't usually bother to vote turned out for this particular Calgary Centre riding and voted for Joe [Clark]," said Roy Heale, publisher of *Outlooks*. "Like other Calgarians, many in the gay community are apathetic about politics," Heale said. "Others are disenfranchised and don't vote because they feel they can't make a difference. I think everyone felt this was a worthwhile vote scenario. Of all places in Calgary... we were in a position where there was enough of us, if we made an effort, we could for once really have an impact on the results."

Voter turnout in Calgary Centre was up 6% over the previous election in 1997. Many believe those were gay and lesbian voters who pushed Clark over the top.

EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS

(Regina) On July 6 the Saskatchewan legislature gave final reading and royal assent to an omnibus bill that amended 24 pieces of legislation related to spousal rights. The changes will now allow a partner in a same-sex relationship to adopt their partner's biological or adopted child. The changes also extend the same rights and responsibilities to same-sex partners as are available to opposite-sex common law couples.

In a move that surprised many, the Saskatchewan Party allowed a free vote for their caucus members. As a result, five Sask. Party MLAs—Yogi Huyghebaert, Bill Boyd, Dan D'Autremont, Ken Krawetz and Milt Wakefield—voted with the NDP/Liberal coalition government in support of the bill.

Justice Minister Chris Axworthy said the bill was required after the Supreme Court ruled two years ago requiring provincial courts to recognize that same-sex couples have the same legal rights and responsibilities as married or opposite-sex common law couples. Axworthy said the changes introduced are absolutely nothing more than the minimum required.

Sask. Party Leader Elwin Hermanson said his party decided to allow a free vote so caucus members could reflect the feelings of their constituents. "If they felt the bill only complied with the high court ruling they could support it. If they thought the bill went beyond the court ruling they should survey their constituents and vote in a manner that reflected their sentiments," he said.

Huyghebaert said his constituents voted 51-49 in favour of the legislation. However, Hermanson said his constituents opposed the bill by a margin of 68-32 percent. He also polled Axworthy's Saskatoon riding and found the numbers were reversed with 68% in favour. "I'm very proud of my caucus and how they handled it," Hermanson added.

PAYING ITS FAIR SHARE

(Winnipeg) The largest gay and lesbian organization in Manitoba says it's time the provincial government started paying for the services it's getting, and is launching a letter writing campaign called "Put In Your 48 Cents Worth" to press its point.

"We've seen a 67% jump in requests for service in a one-year period," said Lisa Passante, president of the Rainbow Resource Centre. "We've asked for core funding in this year's provincial budget to help cover the costs of all the services we provide, and we want to make sure our MLAs understand how overdue, and how important this is."

The Rainbow Resource Centre is marking its thirtieth anniversary this year. It has grown from a small group on the U of M campus to becoming the one-stop shop for information for and about Manitoba's gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited community (GLBTT).

"In the past year, we handled more than 26,000 service requests," says Passante, "up from an average 17,000 a year. That's for everything from counselling help through the province-wide phone line, to lending books from our library, to doing diversity training workshops at U of M Nursing, Education and Social Work faculties. And to date we've never received core funding from any level of government. With more and more mainstream groups consulting us on diversity issues, we think it's time the province recognized the service they're getting that's now going beyond even our most dedicated volunteer capacity."

The Rainbow Resource Centre has put in a grant request to the province for \$100,000 a year in funding, and is pledging to continue to raise close to that amount from its own donors and fundraising efforts. The Centre is making it easy for people who want to direct a letter to their MLA. Its Website (www.escape.ca/~wglrc/) now features an action letter and fact sheet that anyone interested in supporting the campaign can send in to their elected representative.

"We're helping people in ways that aren't offered by any other organization," says Passante, "and we want people within and beyond our community to make their wishes known in the next three weeks as the government finalizes its upcoming budget. You don't have to be a sexual or gender minority to support us. If you believe the services we provide are valuable, spend the money on a stamp, and put in your 48 cents worth. Tell the government that the time has come for our government to recognize the valuable contribution made by the Rainbow Resource Centre to our province's quality of life, and pay for the services it has been receiving at no cost to date."

IT'S OFFICIAL

(Winnipeg) The Manitoba legislature passed Bill 34 in late July after holding hearings on the legislation. The Bill essentially provides equal rights for gay and lesbian couples in a wide range of areas including adoption and encompasses 50 different pieces of legislation. However, it does not affect the definition of marriage, which remains a ritual reserved for heterosexual couples.

Over 50 presentations were made to a committee about the legislation. Most of those presentations addressed the adoption issue that was the most contentious aspect of the changes made to family law legislation. The bill passed 31-22 with the support of all NDP MLAs and the one lone Liberal. The Conservatives voted against the bill.

University of Manitoba law professor Karen Busby, who helped fight for the changes, said she was pleased the bill has finally been passed. "There are many kids that are currently being raised by gays and lesbians. What this will do is regularize their status." She commended the NDP government for making the changes that will help ensure equality for gay, lesbian and bisexual people. "The nuclear family has changed over the past 40 years," she said. "Different types of families do not destroy the family."

Much of the opposition to the bill came from fundamentalist religious groups. Robert Humphrey from a group in Steinbach said that children should not be subjected to being raised by homosexuals because they would learn that homosexuality is normal. "I am an ambassador of Christ, so it would be outrageous for anyone not to listen to me," he claimed. David Reimer, a pastor with Shalom Family Worship, tried to use his Bible to argue that allowing same-sex couples to adopt would lead to moral corruption.

The legislation, titled The Charter Compliance Act, deals with a variety of issues beyond adoption including inheritance rights and Acts such as the Anatomy Act and the Family Farm Protection Act.

Most of the changes are now in effect but a few of them won't come into effect until January 1, 2003 to give government agencies and others time to make changes to address the new legislation.

PERCEPTIONS

EDITORIAL

For the past number of years human rights legislation in this country has said that gays, lesbian, bisexuals and transgendered people have the right to equality. Unfortunately our governments at all levels appear reluctant to believe that to be the case. It seems the only way we win equality in any area is when we take the government to court and win, which we seem to do in the vast majority of cases.

A classic example of this is in the area of marriage. Courts in Ontario and Quebec have ruled in pretty frank and clear language that marriage is an institution that we should have access to. However, this is not good enough for our federal government who are challenging the Ontario court ruling, even though a number of federal cabinet ministers, provincial politicians, religious leaders and newspaper editorial writers agree that it is inevitable that we will win the right to equality on the marriage issue.

In a few days I will be in a meeting with senior bureaucrats in Health Canada, discussing why there are no funding streams in the vast bureaucracy of that department that can be accessed by queer organizations to address the health issues of our community. There are dedicated funding streams for Aboriginals, a women's bureau, dedicated streams for people with disabilities, but no dedicated stream for queer people. The HIV/AIDS division has a separate funding stream for Aboriginals but even though 50% of the people in this country with HIV and 65% of those with AIDS are gay men, there is no dedicated funding stream.

Gay and lesbian youth are still subjected to enormous levels of violence in our education system which supposedly guarantees an equal education for everyone. With 27% of school drop-outs being gay and lesbian, it's clear that equality is not a reality in that system.

Advocating for changes in institutions and systems that will truly provide equality is often a long and frustrating experience. Those responsible for policy in various areas just don't seem to get it. All the politicians I have spoken to about the many issues in our community tell me they agree that there are problems but little seems to change until we go to court.

If our society truly believes in equality for all then it's time the stalling ends and we make the changes that truly allow our community to access equal services and rights. I'm not naive enough to suggest that we will change the hearts and minds of those who wish to deny us equality, but I don't believe we should have to change their minds. The bottom line is that the laws of this country mandate equal treatment and equal access. It's time that became a reality instead of a dream.

RELIGION

Bigotry and the Church	P32 (April 29/87): 4-7
Final Sermon [Rev. Stan Richards]	P71 (March 18/92): 10
Anglicans Consider Queers	P84 (Oct. 27/93): 10
Anti-Gay Minister Dies from AIDS	P88 (April 27/94): 22
Is There a Cure for Christian Fundamentalism?	P91 (Sept. 14/94): 5
Gay Mennonites	P113 (June 4/97): 13
Opening Doors	
[St. Thomas-Wesley United Church, Saskatoon]	P116 (Oct. 22/97): 11
At Issue with the United Church:	
The Uncomfortable Pew	P123 (Sept. 16/98): 8
The Benighted Church of Canada	P126 (Jan. 27/99): 8-9
Funk's Fight Almost Finished	P129 (June 2/99): 12
Doors Slammed Shut	P130 (July 28/99): 12

BIGOTRY and the CHURCH

The following is a condensed version of an article submitted to Angles by Peter Millard.

For the past 38 years, a Roman Catholic order called the Oblates of Mary Immaculate have run a magazine entitled Our Family. It is published from North Battleford and its editor is a priest named Albert Lalonde. Despite its small town origins, Our Family has a large circulation, approximately 14,000, which probably means that it is read by considerably more than that number throughout Canada. The editor is soon to be replaced, and the story of the events leading to his dismissal makes instructive reading for gay men and lesbians, and indeed for anyone concerned with human rights in this country. It provides a chilling example of how the Catholic extreme right is using AIDS as the basis for a campaign of hatred against homosexuals.

In February 1986, Lalonde reprinted an article by California psychiatrist Melvin Anchell. Entitled A Psychoanalytic Look at Homosexuality and AIDS, the article states that "the homosexual is the sickest of all perverts" and "thousands of children are stolen from parents to meet the sexual needs of homosexuals." Anchell says that "one sexual aim is always present" and that is "sexual satisfaction from inflicting physical and/or mental pain on their sexual objects." Homosexuals are labelled psychopaths "not capable of feeling affectionate love for their sex partners" and "the product(s) of premature seduction in childhood."

Anchell would prefer to call AIDS the "homosexual's disease" and says that the virus is

particularly concentrated in the anal region and excrement and most frequently infects the brain, intestinal tract, and usually only one eye. The doctor says that "it is reasonable to assume that the infected eye is the one that the homosexual keeps nearest the anus while engaged in oral and anal sex."

The article ends suggesting that the survival of western civilization is at stake and fuels with disgust an appeal for action. Legislators must be expected to "translate our outrage into laws that will protect normal individuals and children."

Not surprisingly, the article drew a powerful response from several groups and individuals. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission sent a letter of protest and a group of Catholics drew up a petition pointing out errors in the article and suggesting the "the just and Christian treatment of homosexuals is denied whenever our attitudes and laws consider them as less than human." I also wrote in protest to Lalonde and sent copies to various human rights groups as well as to Lalonde's bishop. My reply was published in the July/August issue of Our Family.

Lalonde also wrote to me personally saying that I had denied Anchell's accusations out of hand, with no documentary evidence and no research. My original letter to the magazine had been necessarily short--Lalonde's readership is not the kind to study detailed refutation.

In my reply, I pointed out that Anchell had a tactical advantage by the very enormity and outrageousness of what he had said. Most of what the psychiatrist had written was, to any

reasonably informed person, obvious nonsense. To attempt to refute it with documentary evidence was to elevate it to the level of rational debate where it did not belong. I also tried to point out some of the shaky reasoning in Anchell's article. In Lalonde's letter to me he had admitted that, yes, heterosexuals were known to engage in the sexual acts listed by Anchell. That being the case, I suggested, since Anchell had used such action to condemn the whole of homosexuality, I assumed Lalonde would now be consistent and fair and print an article for an end to heterosexuality too. I then supplied him with a list of authorities who would refute Anchell.

Apparently horrified by the Anchell article, the Oblate Provincial, Father Gerald Weisner, made a retraction in the October 1986 issue of Our Family. He apologized for "the overall tone of the article, for its one-sided compassion, and for its occasional crude and unaesthetic quality." He went on to apologize "for a number of statements within the article which, if left as they are, easily lead to distortion of fact and potentially foster hatred and discrimination."

Undeterred, Lalonde printed, in the same issue, an article which linked the feminist movement with lesbianism and witchcraft. This was apparently too much for the publishers and it became known that Lalonde and a recently appointed editor, Andras Tahn, would soon be replaced.

Judging by the letters to the editor, however, many in Lalonde's readership supported him wholeheartedly. An Ontario writer reminded readers of the Toronto incident where a twelve-year-old boy was murdered and said that, since the politicians would do nothing, "God sent AIDS." Thirteen letters in the December 1986 issue of Our Family praised Lalonde's stand and referred to Anchell as

"esteemed", "dedicated", and having "empathy for a group of people with an enormous, sickening and degrading problem." One letter asked "God (to) continue to bless you as you edit a truly Catholic Christian magazine."

In February 1987, Fidelity, a magazine published in South Bend, Indiana by Ultramontane Associates Inc., took up Lalonde's cause. Fidelity's editor, E. Michael Jones, wrote that "Canada had lost one of the few papers willing to criticize the feminist/homosexual juggernaut in that country." (The magazine is, in fact, to continue publication.) Criticizing both myself and the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Jones asserted that "revulsion and disgust are correct responses" to homosexuality and attacked human rights legislation protecting homosexuals.

Jones also attacked several people who had apologized in print for the Our Family article and said that theologians like Andre Guindon who, in his book The Sexual Creators, presented a sympathetic approach to homosexuality, were creating a pro-homosexual lobby group within the Church.

Jones also ran other anti-homosexual articles in the same issue. Dr. Paul Cameron, for instance, of the pseudo-academic Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality, called homosexuality "our number one health problem" and attacked the U.S. Surgeon General for a soft stand on homosexuality. Cameron went on to say that there was only one solution to the AIDS epidemic: "The homosexual and drug infrastructure must be obliterated . . . As with genocide, homosexuality is a crime against humanity and must be treated as such."

What can we learn from all this?

(continued on page 6)

Anchell, Lalonde, Jones, Cameron and most of those who wrote to Our Family all employ the tactics so familiar in the long and sorry history of the dialectic of hate. They take the most extreme examples they can imagine, apply them to an entire group and create a grotesque stereotype in order to arouse disgust. They cite an action by one member of a group (the murder of a youth by a homosexual man, for instance) and accuse the entire group for the crime. Actions (such as anal intercourse) are condemned when performed by the hated group yet ignored when they occur within the favoured group. They jump from a particular (increased toleration for homosexuals) to an unrelated general (the decline of western civilization). And all this in addition to outright misrepresentation (as in Anchell's half-crazed fantasies).

As gay men and lesbians, we must never let them get away with such tactics. No matter how frustrating it might be, no matter how unpleasant, we must counter every such accusation with a reasoned and calm reply. It is dangerous to dismiss Our Family and Fidelity as just a few voices from the Catholic primitive right. The Our Family readership is large, Fidelity's possibly bigger. Even as we are not in a position to tackle our opponents head on, we can at least write a letter to our MLA or MP or cabinet minister, supporting amendments to the human rights code and demanding sensible action with regard to AIDS. We can be sure that hundreds of those on the opposing side are busy writing.

Another conclusion to be drawn is that the extreme right wing in Canada does not operate alone, independent within this country. Anchell lives in California, and it is a fair assumption that his article was sent to various right wing groups both in the States

6

and Canada. There may be a U.S.-based network supplying the Canadian extreme right with ammunition and support, and it would make an interesting subject for investigative reporting.

Another question that bears investigation is to what extent the ultra right movement in Canada is concentrated in the Roman Catholic church. Research is needed to see what the connections are between journals like Our Family (under Lalonde), the anti-choice movement and REAL Women, for instance. It might turn out that the entire complex is spearheaded by relatively few individuals, but we need to know the extent of it.

One thing is clear. The Vatican itself is playing a powerful and deliberate part in the ultra right movement. The recent letter to bishops concerning homosexuals (progressive Catholics refer to it as the "Hallowe'en Encyclical") is a case in point. The letter condemns homosexuality and deplores the fact that, "even when the practice of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people, its advocates remain undeterred and refuse to consider the magnitude of the risks involved" The encyclical goes on to say that "it is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the subject of violent malice in speech and action" but then contradicts itself with a statement that is breathtaking in its implications: "When homosexuality is condoned, or when civil legislation is introduced to protect behaviour to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the church nor society at large should be surprised when other distorted notions and practices gain ground, and irrational and violent reactions increase." (Emphasis added.)

There is only one way to interpret such a pronouncement. It is a virtual endorsement of extreme opposition (perhaps including violence) to homosexuals generally; to any attempt to include them in human rights legislation; and to any individual or group that attempts to urge the validity of homosexuality. The contributors to Our Family and Fidelity have provided excellent examples of the "violent malice in speech" which the Vatican pretends to deplore but in fact encourages. When the church at its highest level gives the nod, we ought not to be surprised by brutality at the lower reaches.

FINAL SERMON

(Winnipeg) Stan Richards preached his last sermon February 23 at Sherwood Park Lutheran Church. Richards was voted out by a narrow majority of his congregation after it was discovered he was gay and was volunteering with the Metropolitan Community Church. He was supposed to remain at his church until September but in early February Richards accepted a severance package offered by the Lutheran church council.

Richards says he now feels relief. "If I stayed until September, there would be no one left. By me leaving, it (the congregation) has a chance of recovery," he said. Richards was unsure if he could have stayed as the church's minister knowing that some members were uncomfortable with his open confession about being gay. "I need time to heal," he added.

As part of his severance package, Richards will continue to be paid in full and live in the parsonage until August 31. He will also be allowed to continue with a confirmation class he had begun before his ouster.

Richards has also decided against lodging a complaint with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. "Filing a complaint will only polarize my supporters in the congregation," he said. He says he will continue to work with MCC and is considering forming another congregation.

"I've gotten a lot of support. We got about 200 phone calls and letters. There were also a few bashing ones -- people who haul out the Scriptures and hammer the hell out of you," he said. The gay and lesbian community in Winnipeg also started a fund for Richards. "The gay and lesbian community just feels Stan de-



RICHARDS

serves kudos for what's happened and his fine ethical standard -- for his guts," said Mark Zoldy, co-chair of the gay and lesbian pride committee. Richards says he may use any funds raised to retrain as a counsellor to work in the gay and lesbian community.

Richards case has also spurred other Lutheran ministers to come out. Bill Fehr, a former pastor for eight years at St. Stephen's in St. James, told the Evangelical Lutheran Church that he's gay and he wants his name removed from the active roster of pastors. "As a self-affirming gay person, I don't want to belong to an organization that's homophobic," he said. Fehr has been living in B.C. for two years where he writes and paints.

ANGLICANS CONSIDER QUEERS

(Regina) Careful, sensitive planning by the diocesan task force on sexuality resulted in the successful introduction of issues related to the Christian understanding of gay and lesbian orientation at the 1993 synod of the Anglican Diocese of Qu'Appelle held in Regina in October.

Addressing some 270 members of the church, Bishop Eric Bays emphasized the subject of homosexuality would often elicit deeply emotional responses. "There is a need for Anglicans to acknowledge this fact, and yet at the same time to find ways to enter into discussion that allows respect for a variety of opinions while seeking God's truth." Bishop Bays stressed the importance of Anglicans informing themselves about the discussion so they can make contributions to the work of the national group which in turn will report to the General Synod of the church in 1995.

Since this was the first discussion within Qu'Appelle concerning sexual orientation, the focus was on opening dialogue rather than attempting formal resolutions and debate. The process was briefly endangered when shortly after the opening of synod a procedural motion was introduced that would ensure there would not be debate on the issue at this convention. The motion carried after several delegates spoke to the need for careful examination of all aspects of sexual orientation without pressure to make decisions that might later be regretted. One parish which vehemently opposes homosexuality did distribute literature stating their position on the subject.

During the first morning, four presenters related their life stories to the group. No discussion was permitted at this time as each speaker told of growing up gay or lesbian in an often hostile environment, both on the outside and within the church. Each spoke poignantly of their struggle to accept themselves and to establish their place with God, the church and society.

One woman, an ordained minister, related her struggle within the United Church and spoke about being rejected by congregations to whom she provided service, and of the strength she gained from her personal faith. A middle aged man spoke of feeling like a small child watching his family from a distance, knowing he is rejected because of who he is. A young woman seminarian talked of her conviction that she had been healed of lesbianism through her faith in Jesus. Finally a young man told of his struggle to belong

"There is a need for...discussion that allows respect for a variety of opinions while seeking God's truth."

to a religious order, but finally leaving when he came to understand the only way he could remain was to live a lie, deceive and deny his God given nature.

On day two, Professor Terry Donaldson of the college of Emmanuel and St. Chad in Saskatoon offered two opposite ways to approach this difficult issue from a biblical perspective. Afterwards synod members had an opportunity to voice their positions and concerns. Most who addressed the group spoke in favour of careful consideration by parishes of the issues surrounding sexual orientation.

In a brief and powerful statement to those present, Canon Helena Houldcroft of Regina, who chairs the church's national task force, encouraged parishes to give

careful consideration to lesbians, gays and bisexuals, their orientation and related concerns. She cautioned the group not to confuse issues of sexual orientation with those of sexual abuse, and to stay clear in understanding what is meant in each instance.

Comments made privately by many individuals in attendance revealed genuine interest in working towards inclusion of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in the church and the recognition of them as whole people. Although many questions remain for delegates, there seemed to develop a desire to get to know them as persons, and to learn about their lives and struggles for affirmation within the Anglican Communion.

.....

ANTI-GAY MINISTER DIES FROM AIDS

(Vancouver) When the Gay Games were announced for Vancouver in 1990, numerous fundamentalist preachers loudly denounced the gathering of lesbians and gay men and predicted that Vancouver would suffer the wrath of God if the Games were allowed to go on. One of the most vocal opponents against the Games was Frank Shears, a minister with the Burnaby Christian Fellowship. For years Shears had preached against the sins of homosexuality and claimed that God could save people from the demon of homosexuality. So it was natural that Shears would be one of the leaders of the small group of fundamentalists who picketed the opening ceremonies of the Games.

Shears was well-liked by his congregation, where he preached for 14 years, and many believed that he had been called by God to cure people of homosexuality. Shears and his church were very vocal and public in their opposition to the "homosexual lifestyle". In the 1980s Shears appeared on national television to debate MP Svend Robinson about homosexuality. Every opportunity he got, Shears would preach that homosexuality was satanically inspired and could be conquered through God.

But Shears had lived for years with a secret. In 1990 he realized that years of prayer and 17 years of marriage to a woman had not lessened his feelings and sexual attractions for other men. He could no longer ignore who he was and he became sexually active with other men.

When his church discovered that Shears

had been hiding the fact that he was gay all these years they demanded that he make a public confession to his congregation. Shears stood before the people he had ministered to for 14 years and announced that he had been sexually involved with other men. The confession was part of a church-ordered program to save Shears from his gay feelings. Shears said the worst part of the hour-long confession was watching his family members clutch each other, sobbing and sobbing. Shears' marriage ended soon after the confession and he was virtually shunned by church members.

After the public confession Shears said he "really hated God. That's why I got promiscuous. I thought if God was going to kill me, I'd better get it over with. So I had 27 partners in three weekends."

Shears eventually came to grips with his feelings and decided he wanted to explore his feelings and the gay and lesbian community. He began developing healthier safer-sex relationships. But the damage had already been done. In 1991 he learned that he was HIV-positive and a short while later discovered that he had AIDS.

Shears continued to believe that God loved him and that his AIDS wasn't a punishment for being gay. "My big concern is the multitude of young men out there who become disillusioned with God and the church because they want to change their sexual orientation, and cannot," he said. "I just want to send the message that God accepts them the way they are."

Shears died on February 13 of AIDS-related causes.

IS THERE A CURE FOR CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM?

Recently I read a hate-tract put out by a fundamentalist group. It was entitled *Is There a Cure for Homosexuality?* I was so touched they would be concerned about us that I thought I should try to help them in return. So here is a tract for our "Christian" friends:

Jimmy Thumpah looked like a fine all-American boy that you'd just love your daughter to marry. But although Jimmy smiled at everyone and looked normal, he had a secret, a secret that was eating away at him. He had a terrible abnormality: he was obsessed with religion. "Day after day, night after night," he confessed to one of our counsellors, "I would go out searching for a soul-fix. I would hang around churches hoping for a one-night contact—a different one every evening. I must have gone through a hundred or more in one year without finding satisfaction. I constantly felt the urge to pour out my inner being, if you get my meaning. I would do it alone, with a partner, or with groups of people. I found myself in all sorts of weird and unnatural positions—on my knees was my favourite, but it never seemed to work. I spent all my money on religion—every time I listened to a TVangelist I sent away everything I had. I was incapable of a decent caring relationship; all I could do was hate people for not believing what I believed. It was eating me up. My life was in ruins. Then I sought help."

Praise be, we were able to help Jimmy. He is now a decent, caring Humanist, settled with a partner in Vancouver's west end. But there are hundreds of thousands of Canadians still wandering in the darkness. They can be helped.

But, you might ask, why should we be concerned about Christian Fundamentalism (C.F. for short)? You see, most people have no idea of how C.F. eats away at the moral fabric of our society. For in-

stance, it takes away any sense of individual responsibility. Every time C.Fs do something nasty and cruel, they just say they are obeying the word of God, so what they do must be "natural." There's no time to detail all the ways in which C.F. eats away at our society's foundations, but if you have the opportunity, read the great work by the 18th century historian Edward Gibbon. In his universally respected work *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon proves that a central factor in the collapse of that great civilization was... Christianity. Our present-day society is equally at risk.

Let's present some basic facts about Christian Fundamentalism:

1. C.F. is a *Lifestyle*. Don't let anyone fool you on this. No one is born a C.F. It is a *Choice*.
2. Because C.Fs cannot produce C.F. children, they have to proselytize. And this they do with a fervour born of desperation. No one is safe.
3. They are *Everywhere*. In our banks, in our government offices, in our stores, our hairdressing salons, our swimming pools. Most sinister of all, they are in our schools. There they abuse their position of authority and trust by promoting the C.F. lifestyle to tender and indiscriminating minds.
4. They have infiltrated centres of power in just about every branch of our society. This is part of a well-organized plan to put their agenda into practice. What agenda? For example, to take C.F. into every aspect of life—to prevent our hospitals, for instance, from giving certain kinds of health care that do not square with their strange ideas, or to set up schools where nothing but their indoctrination is allowed. Above all, they want to amend human rights laws in order to give themselves special rights.

That's right. *Special rights*. They already use taxpayers' money to support separate schools where the pope's curious ideas

are promulgated. They want more and more schools, to represent all the various habits and practices, getting wilder and wilder and narrower and narrower in their propaganda. All a group of these weirdos have to do to get special tax status is to declare themselves a church. Then their leader can set himself up and drain his followers of their money, fuck them, beat them, and generally have a fine old time, even kill them if he's crazy enough.

And if someone who believes in good old-fashioned values dares to criticize? Well, we're *bigots*. Worse, we're denying them their precious *Human Rights*.

So how do C.Fs get cured? First, they must recognize the state they are in, just like Jimmy Thumpah. Then, with patience and understanding from us, they can gradually abandon their revolting lifestyle. But they must be made aware that decent society cannot tolerate their actions.

It's time for all moral, right-minded people to rise up. We are the silent majority, but we should be silent no longer. C.Fs should not be allowed to meet in their special places where they can ferment their evil. They should not be allowed in schools to pervert tender minds. They should be rooted out from the media (over which they have almost total control). Remember tough love? Harden your hearts. This is not cruelty, this is urgently necessary action for the health, nay, the very survival of the nation.

But remember one thing. Disgusting as C.Fs may seem to us normal folk, they are still human beings. We must treat them with love and, assuming they give up their ways and do exactly what we want them to do, we must forgive them. Hate the sin, but love the sinner. And send us money.

GAY MENNONITES

(Canmore) For the first time ever Western Canadian Mennonites and Church of the Brethren will be holding a conference for Supportive Congregations and lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The Supportive Congregations Network (SCN) of the Brethren/Mennonite Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (BMC) is hosting the conference in Canmore, AB on October 3-5, 1997.

The theme, "Table Music, Embracing Differences, Creating Harmony" draws on the rich Mennonite/Brethren musical heritage, which includes singing in four-part harmony. The tradition of "Tafelmusic," or table music, was a time when families gathered around the kitchen table and made music together. "We are hoping that this will be a time when straight and gay church people can get together and not only 'create harmony' but also celebrate who we are," says conference planner Heather Marshall. "Family, friends and pastors of lesbian, gay and bisexual Mennonites will have an opportunity to gather together in a positive and affirming atmosphere (not to mention beautiful) with lesbian, gay and bisexual people."

Conference planners hope to bring together a variety of people: members of congregations who are affirming, welcoming family and friends of gay and bi people; pastors who are welcoming and would like to lead their congregation through a process to become a welcoming congregation; and lesbian, gay and bisexual people themselves. People from welcoming congregations will have a chance to meet with others who have declared themselves as affirming congregations and parents will meet others whose children are gay.

Gay and bisexual people will have a unique opportunity to share their own stories of being gay within the Mennonite/Brethren church. For many, this has been painful, while others have been warmly embraced by church and family. Many individuals have left the church, whether it is Mennonite or some other denomination. It is often just too painful to remain in a place where sexual orientation other than hetero is simply not tolerated. Many of those same individuals are looking for opportunities to feel welcomed by church people. This conference will provide the time and place to do that.

There are many individuals who have remained within the church, but who have not come out. These people's privacy will certainly be respected. The conference is designed to allow people to attend without having to declare themselves.

"We felt that the foothills of the Rockies in the fall would be a great place to meet and discuss some of these issues, hold workshops, listen to a speaker or two, network, worship, go for long walks and above all have fun," says Marshall. "Canmore offers a perfect setting to step back for a weekend and get together with other church people who are not only accepting, but who also want to do what they can to make our churches safe places. Places where we can all be included in worship, leadership, music, teaching--all aspects of the life of the church, regardless of our sexual orientation."

Anyone wishing to attend the conference, or who know of others who might, whether straight, gay, bi, Mennonite/Brethren or other, can contact Heather at 403-987-4974 or fax 403-987-4089

OPENING DOORS

(Saskatoon) St. Thomas-Wesley United Church in Saskatoon has become the first United church in Saskatchewan to formally declare itself an affirming congregation that openly welcomes lesbians and gays to worship there. It is one of only nine United Church congregations in Canada to take this step.

The declaration comes after more than two years of study and discussion among the congregation. Church members also voted last spring to take the brave step of becoming an affirming congregation.

"People whose lifestyle might be different have not been welcomed by the church with the same intensity," said Rev. Pamela Thomas. "We hope many of the people who have felt hurt or excluded by the Christian church will have their trust restored. We hope they will recognize they do have a place in the church."

During the past two years the church has brought in speakers from organizations like Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) to talk about the experiences and issues of being gay, lesbian and bisexual in Saskatoon today. Members of the committee working on becoming an affirming congregation have participated in training sessions offered by GLHS on providing supportive and positive services to lesbians, gay men and bisexuals. The committee studied the many issues and passed along information they had obtained to other church members.

"On the whole, people have been very supportive but we do have our detractors," said Velma Stevenson, a member of the com-

mittee studying becoming an affirming congregation. "People say they don't know gay and lesbian people. We tell them how one in ten or one in seven people are homosexual, so they probably have worked with someone," Stevenson added. "Others say, 'But the Bible says....' We try to remind them of the context the Bible was written in."

Dick Hetherington, a retired United church minister who has carried out a long and visible campaign against "sodomites" said St. Thomas-Wesley no longer stands on Biblical ground because they are encouraging a type of "inverted, perverted love." Elaine Findlay, another affirming committee member, said the church will try to remain open to those with more traditional views on homosexuality. "There are always those who do not feel they can be openly welcoming and others who are adamantly opposed. It causes us anguish when people feel they may have to leave or when they are angry with the church. But we are strongly called on to be inclusive," she said.

The church celebrated the declaration in a service and potluck supper attended by church members and representatives of Saskatoon's gay, lesbian and bisexual community on October 19.

At Issue with the United Church

FORUM

THE UNCOMFORTABLE PEW

by Heather Funk

I have come to realize that I have a love-hate relationship with the church (sometimes I love it and it hates me/us and sometimes I hate it and it loves me). The last several months of my career in the United Church have been filled with painful realizations about the power of evil within the church and the lack of trust in the power of good to overcome it. I have seen loving, caring and supportive people so terrified by the magnitude of the evil they have experienced that they place their certainty in its power to harm rather than in the power of good that is within them to overcome it! I think that is how prejudices like homophobia are allowed to survive and thrive.

For some reason, I think that all of us, at times, have more faith in the constancy, if not the power, of evil; it seems more reliable or at least easier to find than good. It often seems easier to find a "homophobic jerk" who will scream his/her opinions from the rooftops than a supportive, loving person who will do the same. This is sad!

My first rural congregation was in Manitoba. Just after I found out that I was going to serve there I was sitting at a conference meeting of the United Church of Canada. The atmosphere at this meeting was one of fear and shock. The church was discussing the issue of same gender covenants, and the first openly gay man was attempting to find a church in the conference (no one would risk taking him)... there were threats of violence. I remember sitting there, afraid and wondering what I had gotten into. I was going to serve in the very conference that would not take him! I sat there overwhelmed by the power of evil. I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned around to find an older, grey-haired woman standing behind me. She said, "You're going to be our new minister. My name is Verna and I am from Oakville. I just wanted to let you know that if you ever need a place to stay, I have a big old house in town and you are always welcome."

I felt the power of good overcome the power of evil in that moment! It was going to be okay.

My first few months in the new pastoral charge (church) were extremely busy. (I later discovered that I was the first female minister to serve in this place so I was being invited to all the things that the minister would be invited to as well as all the things that "his wife" would be invited to. We worked it out later.) One night, as I left the house to go and do a wedding rehearsal, my partner expressed concern about how tired I looked. I assured her that I would be home within a couple of hours.

The wedding rehearsal was unbelievable. It seemed as if the only ones who had ever even been to a wedding before were myself and the organist! The rehearsal took two-and-a-half hours. Afterward, the organist invited me back to her house for a Coke. We got talking and I forgot to call home. I tried to call before I left the organist's house but there was no answer, which seemed strange because it was after midnight. On the way home I tried to call again. Still no answer, so I decided to check the answering machine for messages. I heard my partner's voice on the machine. She said that she had gotten worried and decided to get in the car and come to look for me. She said that she was at a gas station on the way to the other town of the two-point pastoral charge I was serving. I called back to the home of the organist (someone I had confided in) and asked her if she would drive around town to find my partner when she headed that way after discovering that she was in the wrong town (which would take all of 60 seconds in a town of 400 people).

I continued my drive home. It was now approaching 2:00 a.m. When I got in the door at home the phone was ringing. I picked it up to hear an operator asking if I would accept the charges. I said yes, then I heard the tired, anxious and teary voice of my partner. She had driven all the way looking in the ditches to find my car because she did not know who it would have been "safe" to call in the town to find out if I was okay. When she arrived home I took a Post-It note and wrote the telephone number of the organist and the telephone number of Verna (the woman from the conference) on it and said that they were "safe" people to call.

As time went by, we added telephone numbers to the wall and eventually my partner had to use the telephone book like everyone else because there were too many telephone numbers for the wall! When I left the pastoral charge, I was presented with a roll which contained the telephone numbers of the people in the congregation. We were to call them whenever we needed them and they would always be there for us... they have been.

The power of Good is stronger than the power of Evil! Let us always act out of the good that is in us, rather than the evil we see in the world.

[Heather Funk was a United Church Minister at the Wilkie-Scott-Landis Pastoral Charge.] [2]

Way back, in the 1980s, the United Church of Canada set up a task group to decide a thorny question: Should they allow openly gay people to be ordained? The group's report was one of those documents that leave you with a rosy glow, because it was so wise, decent and just plain right. Sexual orientation should not be a factor in deciding who was to be ordained, it said. What was more, the group had become "most concerned about... the irrational fear, hostility, and even hatred felt and displayed toward people of homosexual orientation." In 1988 the United Church accepted the recommendation, a courageous and Christian act so rare in religious institutions.

Great in theory, but how does it work out in practice? Take the story of Heather Funk.

Heather Funk was a candidate for the ministry in the United Church. This means she was subject to a head-crackingly complicated system of overseeing and supervision. (Bear with me, I will make it as simple as possible.) There was the Education and Students Committee back in her home base in Manitoba. There was the Lay Supervision Team directly concerned with the pastoral charge of Wilkie/Scott/Landis, Saskatchewan, where Heather went to serve an internship. There was a senior Saskatchewan committee, and there was the Academic Committee of St. Andrews College where Heather was working towards her M.Div degree (there are others, but that's enough for now).

Things were tough when Heather first began work at Wilkie/Scott/Landis in the Fall of 1997. The mere presence of a gay minister caused a fifty percent loss in revenue. People refused to allow her to officiate at funerals or weddings. She and her partner were yelled at in the street. There was even an incident when some boys banged on the windows of the manse. The other ministers in the town of Wilkie, tenderhearted Christians all, made it clear Heather was not welcome at their meetings.

But Heather and her supporters hung in there, and in a remarkably short time things turned around. There was a record crowd at the fall supper, the annual tea and craft sale made tons of money, and more and more people began to show up in church.

Reports on Heather's progress, submitted January 1998, ranged from enthusiastic praise (from members of the Lay team) to more cautious but on the whole positive assessments from St. Andrews personnel. In particular, the report of her supervisor, a retired clergyman of advanced years, was favourable enough. There were a few matters on which, it was agreed, the supervision would focus, but nothing particularly serious.

But, suddenly, relations between Heather and her supervisor turned sour, and at one point he even accused her of lying. Unsolicited by Heather, the Lay Supervision Team wrote to St. Andrews requesting a change of supervisor. That really put the cat among the pigeons. The supervisor's response was a new report, listing faults that had not appeared before, using terms like "paranoia" "poor me syn-

drome," "controlling and defensive mechanisms." In one revealing passage, he accuses Heather of being, in effect, preoccupied with the issue of her sexual orientation. "If we take away the 'struggle' and the 'cause,'" he declared, "I wonder how much the people know about the *person* of Heather. In this setting the 'poor me syndrome' serves to involve her associates in defending, guarding, and supporting her. Is there energy for other things?" He ended by declaring Heather was not yet "suitable for ordination," and was in need of special counselling. This damaging document, obviously written in anger, was circulated to numerous people associated with the internship, although Heather received a copy only minutes before a meeting held to discuss it.

To simplify some very complicated further events... The St. Andrews Academic Committee sent Heather a letter telling her that they were terminating her internship. What's more, she would have to enter a "therapeutic program," and could not apply for another internship for "at least 3 years." Heather, after much stonewalling from St. Andrews, found out how to launch an appeal, but abandoned it when she received a promise from the Education and Students Committee (back in Manitoba) that they would help her find a place in another university to continue her degree. However, when she did apply to various institutions, she found the door firmly shut in her face, and the ESC's promised help never appeared. Frustrated, Heather tried to revive her appeal against the St. Andrews' decision, and was allowed to do so only after she hired a lawyer and took the matter to Queen's Bench. An appeal board was set up, and in November, 1998, the appeal committee roundly criticised the behaviour of St. Andrews College, on grounds both of process and substance, and ordered the decision reversed.

Victory, you would think. But no, Heather's home presbytery in Manitoba, after interviewing Heather, acted as if the appeal had never taken place and repeated St. Andrews' insulting demand that she see a therapist. Heather is now without a job, is blocked from continuing her education, and, in a particularly punitive move, is officially banned from taking any ministerial post in the United Church of Canada.

So what is at the bottom of all this? Is Heather Funk really a bit around the bend and in need of a therapist? It is the old story of an institution (St. Andrews College and pals) closing ranks when its authority is questioned? Or is it homophobia?

Well, no-one who spends five minutes with Heather can have any doubt that they are dealing with a perfectly rational, calm human being. So forget the therapist. An institution threatened with what it sees as disobedience? Very probably this is an important element. Homophobia?

Now, there is no direct evidence of overt homophobia. There is, however, a great deal of suggestive subtext in the numerous documents surrounding this case. There are ominous mutterings about how Heather's internship was "different," there is a tendency, now

and again, almost to blame her for the ugly situation in the Wilkie/Scott/Landis community, or at least a reluctance to understand how it impacted on her. And certainly the supervisor's revised report shows a certain amount of hostility on this subject. The most disturbing feature of the whole business, however, is how the various supervising bodies fell back on the therapy argument: Heather must be sick.

Heather herself is in no doubt on the question of homophobia. In one sense, she points out, accepting the 1988 report had a harmful effect. Before, church members could be openly homophobic, so at least you knew where you were. With the new policy, homophobes have to use indirect, concealed means—and in the system of numerous evaluations of a candidate there are plenty of opportunities.

Heather remains in the wilderness. She and her partner have already spent about \$14,000 on legal fees—they sold their car. She is determined to return to Queen's Bench to force St. Andrews to carry out the demands of the Appeal Committee, and that will cost at least another \$5000.

Meanwhile, the Wilkie/Scott/Landis people, who loved Heather and want her back, are struggling on without a pastor. *[2]*

COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT HEATHER FUNK

(Saskatoon) A group of individuals have come together to form a committee to help Heather Funk in her battle with St. Andrews College. One purpose of the Committee to Support Heather Funk is to help her raise funds to continue her legal battle. So far she has spent \$14,000 to fight for a fair hearing. She expects it will cost an additional \$5,000 to go back to court to fight the next stage. Donations to the fund are needed and appreciated. Donations can be sent to her lawyer, Cheryl Cuelenaere at 1043 - 8th Street E, Saskatoon, SK S7H 0S2. Cheques should be made out to the lawyer with a note enclosed indicating the donation should be held in trust for Heather Funk.

The Committee will also assist in getting accurate information out about what has happened to Heather. To date the United Church has been good at getting their version of events out to people and institutions across Canada. The Committee wants to ensure that the other side of the story is heard as well. The Committee would also be interested in hearing from other people who may have had similar problems with St. Andrews College or the United Church.

The Committee to Support Heather Funk can be reached by writing to P.O. Box 3043, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3S9.

FUNK'S FIGHT ALMOST FINISHED

(Saskatoon) Heather Funk has reached a settlement in her year long fight against St. Andrew's College, a United Church college, in Saskatoon. Funk, who is open and proud about her lesbianism, was well on her way to finishing her Masters of Divinity degree when her Internship supervisor gave her a negative review suggesting she be removed from the pastoral charge she had been working in for eight months. Funk had always received good reviews for her studies prior to that but her internship was revoked on the basis of that one performance review.

Funk found herself unable to complete the degree she had worked towards for a number of years. She also discovered that there was no appeal process at the college. She believed it was unfair that she did have the right to have access to an appeal process over a decision that would have enormous impact on her nearly completed studies. She finally hired a lawyer and went to court to sue for the right for an appeal of the decision. The judge strongly suggested that the college establish an appeal panel or he would rule on the college's actions. The college then agreed to establish an appeal panel which, after listening to witnesses for both sides in the dispute, ruled in Funk's favour, unanimously overturning the decision of the college's Academic Committee that terminated Funk's internship.

Funk assumed that the ordeal was over and that she would now be allowed to

resume her studies and receive her degree. But that was not to be the case. The college interpreted the appeal panel's decision in their own way and continued

The letter acknowledges that Funk's internship was improperly terminated.

to block Funk's return to her studies. In order to continue her studies she had to receive agreement from her Education and Student's Committee in Manitoba who originally recommended and supported Funk for ordination. That committee withdrew their recommendation for ordination, based on her supervisor's evaluation, ordering her not to accept work preaching in any United Church pulpit, although Funk had been preaching in United Church pulpits for the last eight years.

On April 28 Funk and the college reached a settlement. That settlement confirms that the Appeal Committee was unanimous and "reversed the decision of the Academic Committee to terminate the

Internship of Heather Funk."

The College also agreed to confer upon Funk the Degree of Master of Theological Studies as an earned degree. Funk received that degree at commencement ceremonies on May 1.

The College also agreed to circulate a letter to individuals and committees that had received a letter last year informing them of Funk's termination from the internship program. The letter acknowledges that Funk's internship was improperly terminated and that there was "insufficient evidence to support the claims made by St. Andrew's College in terminating her internship." That letter will also be posted on a bulletin board in the college this fall and copies will be sent to other colleges where Funk applied to finish her degree after being denied that option by St. Andrew's. Members of the various committees who have been involved in Funk's educational process will also receive a copy of that letter.

Unfortunately, the ordeal is still not over for Funk. She has been asked to appear before her Education and Student's Committee in Winnipeg on June 4. That committee is expected to rule on whether Funk is now competent to preach from United Church pulpits or whether the original allegations by the college are true. Many people will be interested to see what that committee will now decide.

DOORS SLAMMED SHUT

(Saskatoon) After over a year of fighting to remain in the United Church, Heather Funk has once again had the door slammed in her face. Funk is a former St. Andrew's College student who was pulled out of her internship a few months before completion and shortly before she was ready to graduate with her Masters of Divinity Degree. She was informed that her internship was cancelled because of one negative review by her supervisor. Her Education and Student's Committee followed up by pulling her candidacy which meant she could no longer pursue her career of being a United Church minister.

Funk fought back against the college and won the right to have an appeal committee investigate the decision made by St. Andrew's College. That appeal committee ruled that the college erred in their handling of Funk's case and that there was no merit in the college's vague allegations about Funk. Funk thought her year-long ordeal was over but her Education and Student's Committee had other ideas.

Funk was summoned to appear before that committee in Winnipeg on June 4. Funk assumed the committee would reverse their decision to withdraw her candidacy in light of the decision by the college to overturn their suspension. The committee met with Funk for five minutes and announced that they would not return her candidacy status, meaning Funk could not finish her studies and be appointed to a congregation in the United Church. The committee also indicated they were not prepared to discuss with Funk their reasons for withholding her eligibility for ordination.

Funk said the committee gave her no opportunity to answer the concerns the committee had that made them decide Funk was not a suitable candidate to become a United Church minister. Funk said the committee's actions have put a black mark on her by saying she wasn't suitable for ordination.

To date Funk has spent in excess of \$17,000 fighting to remain in the United Church. She is considering suing her Education and Student's Committee but isn't sure she can afford to continue fighting a case which has already been so costly.

CELEBRATION

Vancouver Memories [of 1984 2 nd Annual Gay Summer Games]	P10 (Sept./Oct. 1984): 6-7
Edmonton Gala 85 [calendar of events]	P16 [1985]: 7
Metamorphosis – A Gay Thanksgiving	P20 [1985]: 11-13
Native Gays & Lesbians [Winnipeg celebration]	P57 (May 30/90): 10
Prairie Participants Packing [for Celebration '90 Gay Games]	P58 (July 11/90): 7
We've Got Pride [Gay Pride celebrations in prairie cities]	P58 (July 11/90): 8-9
Counterparts IV [Winnipeg film festival]	P64 (April 24/91): 20
Pride is Back [in Saskatoon]	P80 (April 21/93): 13
Heroes and Heroines	P82 (July 28/93): 5-6
Magic Awards [Manitoba]	P117 (Dec. 3/97): 19
And the Winner Is... [Doug Wilson Award]	P119 (March 18/98): 11
Wild Rose Award Winners [Calgary]	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 13
Contributions Recognized [Edmonton]	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 14
Pride Awards Given [Regina]	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 19
A Night of Pride [GALA Awards, Saskatoon]	P154 (July 31/02): 14
"Let Us Now Praise Famous Men..."	P95 (March 8/95): 6
Positively Queer	P95 (March 8/95): 27
"The Fire I've Become"	P96 (April 26/95): 24
The Meaning of Pride?	P97 (June 7/95): 9
Spousal Benefits Victory	P98 (July 26/95): 23
Glad To Be Gay	P99 (Sept. 13/95): 9
University Recognizes Gay Activist [Neil Richards]	P100 (Oct. 25/95): 10
Prairie Pride	P113 (June 4/97): 19
No Proclamation [but Regina will celebrate]	P122 (July 29/98): 10
Dazzling Pride Week in Regina	P130 (July 28/99): 10-11
Editorial [on Pride parades]	P136 (April 19/00): 3

(continued on next page)

Saskatchewan Pride 2000:

Pride Week 2000 [Saskatoon]	P137 (May 31/00): 19
Saskatchewan Gay/Les/Bi Pride Parade	P137 (May 31/00): [32] (back cover)
Pride Remembrances	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 4, 6
Prairie Pride	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 10
No Pride for NDP	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 11
Flying Proud [Saskatoon]	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 12
2001 Saskatchewan Pride Parade [display ad]	P145 (June 6/01): [32] (back cover)
A Really Big Show [exhibition]	P145 (June 6/01): 22
'Toon Town Pride [Saskatoon]	P146 (Aug. 1/01): 11
Metamorphosis Emerged	P148 (Oct. 24/01): 13
Saskatoon Pride 2002	P153 (June 5/02): 2
Prairie Pride 2002	P153 (June 5/02): 10-12

VANCOUVER MEMORIES

GENS HELLQUIST

It has been a couple of weeks since the Goldenrods returned from Vancouver and the 2nd Annual Gay Summer Games. The experience has left me with many fond memories not only of the Games but also of the process that led to Saskatoon fielding a men's softball team in the Games. The exercise of putting a team together and entering the Games has proven to be a valuable experience for the whole gay community.

In many ways the energy that grew up around the team reminds me of the heady days in the early and mid 70's when Saskatoon was recognized nationally as having one of the more organized and together gay communities in Canada. It has been some time since such a large group of gay people have worked together as a team to accomplish a common goal. That energy is not likely to dissipate and is likely to grow to provide more alternatives for the community.

Last winter when the idea of getting a team together was first discussed there appeared to be some skepticism about the success of such a venture. That skepticism slowly gave way to assurances that we would succeed. Over the course of the spring and early summer over thirty men expressed in-

terest in being part of the team. Because of job and other commitments that number had dwindled to 16 by the time the team left for Vancouver. Many other people assisted the team by helping coach, keep score, cheer and other functions. Many helped raise money through dances and raffles. A women's team from Saskatoon and a men's team from Regina helped by taking part in exhibition games and tournaments. All these people were an important part of the success of getting the Goldenrods to Vancouver to represent Saskatoon.



One important Legacy that the team has left Saskatoon's gay community is the mixed community dances that were held to raise funds. Over 200 gay men and Lesbians attended the last dance in July. Plans are already underway to continue holding regular community dances to raise funds for other community groups. It has been some time since mixed dances have happened in Saskatoon.

By August 2 all 16 team members had arrived in Vancouver along with a contingent of Saskatoon fans. We had accomplished our goal of putting a team together and getting to Vancouver. Now

can't page 7

from page 6

we wanted to see if we could win or at least not embarrass ourselves. We didn't win any of our games but I think we won the hearts of many people at the games.

At the opening night "Meet the Athletes Party" at Buddy's we were made to feel welcome. The evenings emcee welcomed us by informing the crowd that believe it or not the prairie fairies from Saskatoon were at the Games. From that moment on we became one of the more visible groups at the Games. During our second game while we were going down to another lopsided defeat a group of spectators burst into a rendition of "I left my heart in Saskatoon high on the hill." Many spectators came over to say how glad they were to see us there and how much they hoped we would return next year. During the awards banquet when the gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded to the various winners Saskatoon was the only team to receive a standing ovation. They loved us and wanted to make sure that we would return next year.

On the closing day of the Games a gay pride parade took place through West-End Vancouver. Saskatoon marched near the front behind our banner. Many people applauded us or came up to talk to us. One young man was rather surprised to see us. He had just moved from Saskatoon to

Vancouver. He didn't know there was a team. I don't think he was aware of much of a community here at all. I got the impression that he was having second thoughts about leaving Saskatoon. Others came up to talk to us because they had been born and raised in Saskatoon and left in the late sixties or early seventies. They wanted to see what Saskatoon was growing for gay people these days. Many other faces of ex Saskatoonians applauded us as we passed. We were also the only sports team to march in the parade.

The Games themselves were a wonderful experience to share. Over 300 athletes from many cities were present. The Games are part of a growing gay sports movement in North America. Gay people are discovering that there are many different ways for us to meet one another and share experiences. In 1986 the 2nd Annual Gay Olympics will be held in San Francisco. Next year the 3rd Annual Summer Games will be held again in Vancouver. I hope that Saskatoon can send a much larger contingent of people to the different events. It is an event that I hope many more people can experience. It is nice to know that we are not alone but part of a much larger Gay community across North America.



EDMONTON



A CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- June 20: Lesbian (women only) Drop In with wine and cheese. 7-9 at 9926 112A Street. Call 488-2918.
- Hepatitis B. A presentation. 7:30 St. Stephen's College. Wine and cheese courtesy GATE. 424-8361.
- June 21: A jazz concert with Louise Rose and the Vocal Minority. 8 pm. Library Theatre, #7 Winston Churchill Sq.
- June 22: GALA Dance, 8-1 at Bonnie Doon Community Hall, 9240 93 Street.
- June 23: GALA picnic, noon til 9 pm. For information and transportation, call 482-6845, 488-2918 or 438-5168
- June 24: Films at the Princess Theatre. 10337 82 Avenue.
- June 25: Public Forum. 7:30-10 at the Phoenix Downtown, 10044 101A Ave., Fourth Floor.
- June 26: Lesbian Book Fair, 7-10 at Common Woman Books, 8210 104 St. Wine and cheese social.
- June 26/7: Gala Art Show, call 433-0757.
- June 27: GAY PRIDE DAY. 8pm at the Art Show. Call 426-1516 for info.

FILMS AT THE PRINCESS

Please call the Movie Line at 433-5785 to confirm the times of screenings.

The Times of Harvey Milk: June 21-24.

Advise and Consent: July 3.

Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean: July 7.

Manhattan: July 11.

The Boys in the Band: July 15.

Death In Venice: July 24.

Suddenly Last Summer: July 30.

Silkwood: August 5.

Some Like It Hot: August 10.

Streamers: August 14.

Another Country: August 26.



METAMORPHOSIS - A GAY THANKSGIVING

It wasn't your usual Thanksgiving family get-together. Eight turkeys and a million peeled and mashed potatoes later, 250 gay men and lesbians sat down to a traditional feast with all trimmings, from cranberry sauce to pumpkin pies.

Metamorphosis, in its eighth year, is a prairie celebration of lesbians and gay men that takes place in Saskatoon every Thanksgiving. Metamorphosis aims to offer gays and lesbians a chance to celebrate Thanksgiving in a way that recognizes and supports our choices and life styles.

The weekend activities included several dances, workshops, a mixed supper with a large non-smoking section, a concert with Louise Rose, Heather Bishop and Tracy Riley, an MCC service and Thanksgiving feast. The scheduling of activities and free time allowed people to participate in most events, while still having time to visit with friends and relax.

The participation of gay men was stronger than it has been for several years. It was the aim of Metamorphosis to begin to bridge the gap between lesbians and gay men. This year's "Lavender Bistro" invited both men and women to enjoy live piano music over a

leisurely dinner hour before the mixed dance, usually the biggest event of the weekend. The Bistro broke from tradition in that there are usually separate meals for men and women followed by a short coffeehouse. While some commented that they missed the coffeehouse, many more favoured the leisurely setting of the Bistro, and especially enjoyed that both men and women participated.

While only one gay man consistently sat on the organizing committee, many were involved in organizing various events. As one man said, "You'll probably never see any of the men in the community sitting on the committee. How many women would join a committee with a dozen men on it?" Men in the community, however, agreed to work on various tasks. In this way, lesbians and gay men worked together organizing the weekend events, and encouraged more male participation.

A policy decision on part of the organizing committee stating that all people attending the dances must be 16 years of age became the focal point of a grievance that had been growing within the women's community. While the issue presented by concerned mothers was freedom of choice for their children, the underlying issue seemed to be the lack of support for lesbian mothers in the community. Because of this dissention, several workshops were cancelled due to the workshop leader withdrawing her support. Throughout the weekend various factions met to discuss the issue. It was proposed that next year there be more workshops for children and a dance for children. The age of people attending functions, where alcohol is being served is also under reconsideration.

During Metamorphosis 1984, it was questionable whether Saskatoon had the energy and people to continue hosting Metamorphosis. At that time Edmonton was enthusiastic to

host it. Since Metamorphosis was a Saskatoon project, we decided it would continue to be so. It was that crisis that brought together the strongest working committee ever in the history of Metamorphosis. As we toasted our wine glasses to the success of Metamorphosis a week before the event, someone commented that we were still the same group, largely, that had begun together the November before. Another chimed in, that we were still friends.

After the feast on Monday, when the last of the dishes were done and the coffee urns put to rest, the organizing committee held their own impromptu celebration. There we were, talking about plans for next year, ways to make the weekend even better, ideas about pancake breakfasts and calendars. And almost all of us agreed to work on the committee again. In the past the committee has been so exhausted that they gladly handed over the books to a fledgling committee. We'll continue and look forward to seeing new members on the committee and we welcome your energy and suggestions.

Bernadette Harman

METAMORPHOSIS FINANCIAL STATEMENT

EXPENDITURES

Moon Joyce Concert.....	\$2336.31
Phone Bills.....	\$91.50
1984 Bills.....	\$51.35
Office Supplies.....	\$174.35
Buttons.....	\$134.44
Paper Supplies.....	\$239.09
Publicity.....	\$1080.78
Men's Social.....	\$67.17
Saturday Night Bistro.....	\$398.66
Feast.....	\$343.54
Dances.....	\$1944.64
Film.....	\$369.05
Child/Day Care.....	\$536.28
Facility Rentals.....	\$910.00
Misc.....	\$119.18

Total Expenditures.....\$10,646.53

REVENUE

Balance from 1984.....	\$2336.31
Revenue from 1985.....	\$12,868.68
Total.....	\$15,204.99
Current Bank Balance.....	\$4558.46
Outstanding Bills.....	<u>\$736.00</u>
Final Total.....	<u>\$3822.46</u>

PLEASE NOTE: The first organisational meeting for Metamorphosis 1986 will be held on December 15 at one o'clock p.m. in meeting room number one at the Saskatoon Public Library. Anyone interested in participating in any capacity is encouraged and welcome to attend.

NATIVE GAYS & LESBIANS

(Winnipeg) Gay and lesbians are invited to attend a gathering for "Spirituality in the 90's" in Winnipeg August 1 to 5. Winnipeg's Nichiwakan Native Gay Society is hosting the gathering which will be held on forty acres of wooded land forty-five minutes north of Winnipeg. The event, which is open only for native gays and lesbians and their partners and family members, is a chemical-free gathering with no drugs or alcohol allowed. Native gays and lesbians from North and South America are encouraged to attend.

This year's gathering is the third one to be held. The first one was at the Minneapolis American Indian

Center in 1988. Some of the issues addressed at the gathering were: chemical dependency, AIDS, coming out, relationships. There was also a women's Pipe Ceremony and a Giveaway. The second gathering was held in northern Wisconsin in 1989 with seventy-five people in attendance. Those attending participated in sweats, workshops and the first Indian gay and lesbian pow-wow.

The organizers of this year's gathering hope to highlight native traditional values, who they were and who they are. It is hoped that participants will also see the gathering as a means for native gays and lesbians to come out of isolation. Activities will include story telling, getting acquainted with different native traditions and sharing experiences as gay and lesbian natives. There will also be a pow-wow this year and participants are encouraged to bring their own outfits. The organizers are asking for VHS videotapes on topics of interest AIDS education, art & culture, etc, to preview for use at the gathering.



Additional information on the gathering can be obtained by contacting the Nichiwakan Native Gay Society, 616 Broadway Ave, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 0W8. Interested people can also phone Albert at (204) 772-3606, Roger at (204) 774-6310, Myra at (204) 582-3726 or Marilyn at (204) 783-4950.

PRAIRIE PARTICIPANTS PACKING

The prairies will be well represented at Celebration '90. Teams are making the trip from Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Edmonton and Saskatoon. A few prairie residents will also be part of the cultural activities. Over 250 participants are registered to compete in a range of athletic events. Many other prairie gays and lesbians will be in Vancouver to cheer on their home team and be a part of this gala event.

Calgary, which has been organizing the longest of any prairie city, will be sending the largest team to Vancouver. Calgary's team, which will comprise approximately 100 women and 70 men, will compete in a variety of sports. Fastball and softball will have the largest number of participants from Calgary. Two women's fastball teams will be there along with a women's and a men's softball team. A Men's volleyball team and a women's basketball team will complete the roster of ball teams. Fifty bowlers have registered to compete in the Games and participants are also registered from Calgary in Marathon, track and field, golf and squash.

Winnipeg's team is comprised of bowlers. Ten members of Winnipeg's Tuberose Bowling League will be hitting the lanes in Vancouver.

Saskatoon's team will comprise 15 individuals representing their city. Six women will be part of an ice hockey team which will also include players from Regina and other cities. Two Saskatoon men will compete with a volleyball team going from Regina. Four men will splash into the pool to compete for Saskatoon in swimming events. Two women have registered for croquet while one man will be competing in badminton.

Regina will be represented at the Games by a men's volleyball team, the Regina Monarchs. The team will also have on their roster one player from Moose Jaw and two from Saskatoon. The Monarchs are grateful for the support they have received from Regina's gay/lesbian club, Scarth Street Station. The team has been staffing the bar on Wednesday and Thursday nights with tips going to the team. They have also been selling "Station Wear" with proceeds helping to defray the team's costs.

Team Edmonton doesn't have definite numbers yet on their participation but approximately 40 gays and lesbians are expected to compete in the Games. The majority of the team will be women competing on a hockey team and a soccer team. The men will be fielding a team in the volleyball tournament. Individual athletes will compete in equestrian, triathlon, tennis, cycling, golf and powerlifting.

PERCEPTIONS will be at Celebration '90 covering the participation of prairie lesbians and gay men. A special Games issue is being planned for late August showcasing the men and women from the prairies. Anyone from the prairies who will be participating in various activities is encouraged to let us know at PERCEPTIONS so we will be sure to follow your progress.

Celebration '90 promises to be one of those events that no-one should miss. Where else can gay men and lesbians party with 30,000 visitors and thousands more Vancouverites who are like minded. Time is running out so make your plans to be in Vancouver August 4 - 11. See you there.

Gens Hellquist

WE'VE GOT PRIDE

Four different cities on the prairies held successful pride activities during the week of June 17 to 24. Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and Edmonton all reported successful events for gay and lesbian pride week. Saskatoon remains the only major prairie city without any celebration of gay/lesbian pride.

On June 17 Winnipeg gays and lesbians gathered in Memorial Park to begin their pride day. Speakers at the rally discussed the importance of and meaning of pride celebrations. Following the rally 110 lesbians and gay men marched through downtown Winnipeg. A few hecklers hurled the usual epithets of "sick", "perverts" and "you don't deserve to live" at the marchers. The march wound its way back to Memorial Park where they were looking forward to entertainment. Unfortunately the scheduled entertainers cancelled at the last minute so the rally broke up sooner than expected. A social later that evening at the West End Cultural Centre ended another successful pride celebration.

Calgary had a full week of activities planned to mark gay and lesbian pride week. Over 200 people attended a rally at the Old Y June 18. People had been encouraged to wear masks to highlight how gays and lesbians still do not have legal protection from discrimination in Alberta but most participants chose to appear without a mask. The rally, sponsored by the Calgary Lesbian and Gay Political Action Guild, heard speakers from the city and the

province including Liberal MLA Sheldon Chumir. The rally was well covered by the local media who generally presented a positive perspective on the event.

A variety of other events hosted by local bars were also popular. A Murder Mystery Dinner Theatre and a concert by the Rocky Mountain Singers were also popular. The week was capped off with a slowpitch softball tournament that attracted 300 players and later that evening a dance drew 500 gay men and lesbians. Pride organizers were pleased with the success of this year's celebration and have set their sights on next year.

Regina once again managed to create a controversy with their pride activities. The organizing committee, comprising representatives from most of Regina's gay/lesbian groups, once again applied for an official proclamation from the city and were again turned down. The committee reacted by paying \$3,000 to place a full page ad in the Regina Leader Post. The ad was headed with "The Lesbian & Gay Pride Committee of Regina Hereby Declares June 18 to 24 as Lesbian & Gay Pride Week '90." The text, superimposed over a large pink triangle, discussed the history of pride celebration and why they are necessary. It also addressed the myths that surround gay men and lesbians and what the situation in Canada is like for gays. The bottom quarter of the ad listed 111 organizations and individuals who "joined in supporting the lesbian and gay community in Regina in their pride celebrations" by contributing to the cost of the ad. The list included

unions and 21 donations that were listed as anonymous. Kathy Hamre, a member of the organizing committee said they still need to raise about a third of the cost of the ad.

Regina's committee also applied to Regina police for a permit to march through downtown to the provincial legislative buildings. Chief Ernie Reimer refused to issue a permit saying he felt it wasn't appropriate to parade one's sexual orientation and he didn't feel it would justify assigning cars and resources to it. The march occurred without the permit and marchers headed out on the sidewalk. When they hit Alberta Street they found the sidewalks and part of the roadway under construction. They took to the traffic lane and marched down the street and continued on the street once they passed the construction area slowing traffic to a crawl. The police cooperated by stopping traffic to let the marchers through. Hamre feels the police ended up using more resources than if they had issued a permit.

Regina also ran a film festival but it was poorly attended mainly due to poor advertising. The week ended with a dance June 23 which was attended by over 100 people. A picnic on June 24 capped the week's events with 35 participants.

Hamre said the organizing committee is considering launching a complaint with the Human Rights Commission over the city's refusal to issue a proclamation and over the police's refusal to issue a parade permit.

(continued on page 9)

(continued from page 8)

Organizers for Edmonton's pride activities are pleased with this year's festival. The highlights included the parent's workshop (see article this issue) which was a new idea which was well received. A rally, held at the Molson Plaza in downtown Edmonton, was successful with 100 people in attendance. The rally was addressed by a number of speakers including Winnipeg gay alderman Glen Murray. Edmonton Mayor Jan Reimer was also scheduled to address the rally but was delayed in a council meeting and didn't appear until the rally had ended. A dance co-sponsored by the Imperial Court of the Wild Rose and the Community Centre ended the week on a successful note. Organizers feel that this year's celebration was one of the best yet.

ENTERTAINMENT

COUNTERPARTS IV

"Counterparts IV", April 26 to May 3, marks Winnipeg's fourth Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. It will open with Law of Desire (Spain) by Pedro Almodovar, whose other movies include Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down! and the hilarious Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown. Law of Desire focuses on Pablo, a film director who suffers from unrequited love for Juan and becomes involved with obsessively possessive Antonio. Pablo's sister Tina, used to be his brother. Comedy, violence and fantasy mix in a film that is intriguing but falls short of greatness.

Looking for Langston and Comrades in Arms, both British films, will be shown together on April 27 and 28. The former looks at the work of poet Langston Hughes during the 1930's and 40's in Harlem, when homosexuality was called a "sin against the race". The latter film features six lesbians and gay men talking about their experiences in the armed forces in World War Two. Two short German films, Positive and Silence = Death, will show on April 29. Director Rosa Von Prauhem (A Virus Knows No Morals) continues to look at the harsh realities of the AIDS crisis

Best Documentary Academy Award winner Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt (U.S.A., 1989) will be screened on April 30 and May 1. It contains the stories of five people who died because of AIDS, as well as news reports about the history of the epidemic.

Salut Victor (Canada), showing on May 2, examines a friendship which develops between two elderly gay men in a retirement home. Five Feminist Minutes, another Canadian film, will show on May 3. It consists of sixteen five-minute films by female artists from across the country. They range from "Family Secrets", a recollection of sexual abuse, to "We're Talking Vulva", an unusual rock video.

From April 26 to May 2, "Counterparts IV" will use Cinematheque, 100 Arthur Street (Artspace Building). It will move to Cinema Main, 245 Main Street for the last evening of the festival. All screenings will begin at 8:00 pm.

Donald Campbell

PRIDE IS BACK

(Saskatoon) After an absence of many years, Lesbian & Gay Pride Week will once again be celebrated in Saskatoon. The theme of this year's celebration is "Homecoming '93" and former Saskatonians are being encouraged to come back home to celebrate with Saskatoon's growing gay and lesbian community. A variety of activities is being planned for the celebration which is being held June 22 to June 27.

The first of what is hoped will be an annual multi-media art show, *Queer Celebration: Art by Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Artists*, will kick off the week. The show being held at the AKA Gallery will run for six days during the celebrations. All lesbian/gay/bisexual artists are invited to submit 1-5 works in any media for display at the show. Every level of artist is welcome and interested artists are asked to send a brief description of their art, including the number and approximate size of works to be shown, and slides/photos if available, along with any special requirements the artists may have to the committee organizing the show. All works are required to be framed and submissions should be sent to Pride Week Art Show, c/o GLHS, Box 8581, Saskatoon, SK S7K 6K7.

The Broadway Theatre will be staging a lesbian and gay film festival during three days of the Pride Week. Dates and films are still being finalized at this point.

A show-case of local talent will be held at a Coffee House/Awards Night on Friday, June 25. A Pride dance will occur on Saturday June 26 with popular DJ Bob Harvey playing the tunes. If sufficient interest is shown a potluck will be held before the Saturday dance.

Sunday June 27 will see a Carnival Day at Diefenbaker Park. The activities will include softball, information booths, a barbeque, face painting for the kids and more activities which will be announced at a later date. Sundays activities will be kicked off with a multi-denominational religious service.

This year Gay & Lesbian Health Services will be presenting Saskatoon's first Lesbian and Gay Awards to occur at the coffee

house. The awards will be presented to lesbians and gay men who have made significant contributions to the growth and development of Saskatoon's lesbian and gay community. Anyone, with the exception of GLHS staff, is eligible for one of the four awards to be presented, Woman of the Year, Man of the Year and two Community Service Awards. Any two people in the community may nominate anyone for one of the awards. A selection committee of lesbians and gay men has been appointed from the general lesbian and gay community. Nominations forms are available at GLHS and other locations. Nomination forms must be returned to GLHS by June 15. Information on the awards may be obtained by calling 665-1224.

The organizing committee for this year's celebration is still looking for volunteers to help make this celebration a huge success. Anyone interested in getting involved can call 665-1224 and leave their name and phone number.

Saskatoon isn't the only prairie city staging Lesbian & Gay Pride celebrations. If you are interested in getting involved in celebrations in your city call the organizing committee or phone-line in your community, check the In Your Area pages, and help celebrate the pride and diversity of our community.

PERCEPTIONS

It's becoming a tradition for the larger communities on the prairies to present awards to lesbians and gay men each year during Pride celebrations. The awards are given to recognize the role those people have played in developing a strong, vital and healthy lesbian and gay community. This year Saskatoon and Edmonton joined with Winnipeg and Calgary in recognizing people in their communities.

On more than one occasion I've heard disparaging comments about such awards. It's been suggested that singling a few individuals out of the community to give them an award is elitist when there are many who toil without recognition.

I don't agree. I believe it's important that we recognize the heroes and heroines in our community. Those people who give of their time, their energy, knowledge and often their money to make our community a safer place. They often take the risk of being publicly identified as lesbian or gay which can still carry risks. Yes, it's impossible to publicly recognize everyone but by recognizing some we send a message to all that their contributions are important. Often all we hear in our community is the bitching about what this person or that person is doing that doesn't please us. Or how this or that organization isn't quite perfect. We need to acknowledge that there are many people and organizations working to change our society and our community.

One of the biggest problems our community suffers from is the lack of role models, especially for young lesbians and gay men coming into our communities. When so much of our lives and our community is still hidden by the shadow of the closet it's important to see that there are those who are openly gay or lesbian, involved in building a strong lesbian and gay community and living complete and successful lives. We need to be able to see that anything is possible if we are willing to work for it. Those who are recognized by awards are role models for all of us.

We tend to be a rather anarchistic community that shuns the notion of leadership even though many provide that leadership by their work and dedication to bettering the lives of all of us. We need to stop and thank those whose work allows us to enjoy a better life whether it's by presenting community service awards during pride week or thanking the volunteer at the door the next time we go to a community dance.

In any community it's usually a small handful of people who get involved in the many organizations that contribute to our lives. I wish it wasn't so but I long ago learned that most people are content to sit on the sidelines and let a few do the work. If anything, we need more ways to recognize the heroes and heroines in our community instead of waiting for once a year. How about monthly community service awards?

May I have the envelope, please? The winners of this year's awards on the prairies are:

Winnipeg's Second Annual "Magic Awards" were presented at a banquet on Gay/Lesbian Pride Day, June 27. These awards are given annually by the Lambda Business and Professional Club of Winnipeg to honour services to the lesbian and gay communities.

This year those honoured with awards were: **Joe Taylor**, **Beverly Suek** and **Mona Katawne**, the founders of Kali-Shiva, an organization which provides home care and support for those suffering from AIDS; **Shawna Dempsey** and **Lori Millan**, performance and video artists; **Heidi Streu**, longtime Board member of the Village Clinic and member of the Women and AIDS Committee; and **Wayne Baerwaldt** and **Noam Gonick**, directors of Plug-In Art Gallery and organizers of this year's "Festival de Voyeur," a multi-disciplinary queer festival of the arts.

Calgary presented a long list of awards

which are given out by the Speak Sebastian radio program. This year's Speak Sebastian winners were: Man of the Year was **Bill Taylor**, who is a staff member with SHARP and pastor of the Alleluia MCC church; Women of the Year was **Sue Stevenson** who is the current president of Camp 181 and was involved in re-organizing that social group; a Community Service award was given to **Garry Reimer** who is a staff member of AIDS Calgary and is involved in organizing Teams of Unity for the 1994 Gay Games, Project Pride and the roundtable of community organizations; the Humanitarian Award went to **Min Coulson** who, as a volunteer, delivers meals to clients of AIDS Calgary; Athlete of the Year was **Harold Braun** who is involved with Alpine Front-runners and the Calgary Roadrunners as well as a participant in Teams of Unity 94. Awards of Distinction were given to **Niall O'Rourke** who was instrumental in organizing the Speak Sebastian radio show; **Michele Sharp** who also helped start Speak Sebastian and is currently involved with Project Pride; **Barbie Anderson** who is the founder of Illusions Club as well as an operator of B & B Leather and **Tom Rash** who was recognized for being a spiritual mentor in the community as well as working with PFLAG, the police liaison committee and community counselling. **Trax** was awarded the Business of the year and a Special Award was given to **Nicola Neumann** who has been one of the movers and shakers in Calgary's lesbian and gay community for a number of years and is moving soon to Australia.

Saskatoon's Gay & Lesbian Health Services presented the first community awards this year. The GALA Awards were given to the following people: Man of The Year was **Shawn Mooney** who has been involved in numerous groups including Gays & Lesbian at the U of S, GLHS, and PERCEPTIONS; Woman of The Year was **Colleen Wieggers** who has been involved in GLHS and a women's radio program on the alternative radio station; Community Service Awards were given

to Barb Clay who has been involved in numerous groups including being a founder of Gay & Lesbian Support Services, an employee of AIDS Saskatoon, and various women's groups; and Neil Richards who has worked in the background on many issues including AIDS awareness, lesbian/gay rights, PERCEPTIONS, as well as being the community's historian.

Edmonton also presented their first community awards this year. Community Service Awards were presented to Michael Phair, Man of The Year and Maureen Irwin, Woman of the Year. (See News Prairies for story on Maureen Irwin. *ed.*) Phair has been involved in numerous community activities and last year was elected, as an open gay man, to city council. Irwin has been involved in numerous commu-

nity groups including GALA, Womonspace, Gay & Lesbian Community Centre and PFLAG. The awards in the future will be known as the Phair and Irwin Awards.

In accepting his award in Saskatoon, Shawn Mooney made a speech which is reproduced here. We believe it speaks for many of us.

QUOTATION

FRUITCAKE OF THE YEAR

by Shawn R. Mooney

Dear Dave:

Guess what? I'm the Fruitcake of the Year! I know you'll be pleased. It's been a long road for me, from those high school days in the locker room, where you'd spit in my face almost every day. shove me against the wall. kick me when I was changing. "Fuckin' fruitcake," you'd say to me Dave, as you roughed me up almost every day.

I think about you often. Dave, and I really hate what you did to me back then. When I tell my friends about you, I still feel proud that, in four years of school with you, not once did I ever speak to you. look you in the eye, or show any of the pain you caused me. I wouldn't even wipe the spit off my face until after I was out of your sight. That pissed you off, didn't it. Dave?

"Fuckin' Fruitcake." Well. Dave. you *were* right after all. I bet you were overjoyed to learn how right you were, when you and the whole town heard me phone in to confront Dr. Paul Cameron on the Roy Norris show that time. Paul Cameron. the infamous homophobe; he reminded me a lot of you, Dave. Said all us fruitcakes should be quarantined on an island, where we could infect each other till death do us part. Had someone explained what "quarantine" meant, Dave, you probably would have agreed.

A few months later, I wonder if you heard me and Mom on the Roy Norris show that morning, talking about being gay, being the mother of a gay son. Wonder what you thought? Wonder if you knew that I knew you were listening...

Around that time, in the bar back home one night, you told my sister she'd better not let me be around her young son. She sure told you where to go, didn't she?

Fruitcake.

I would not let you see me wipe the spit off my face.

"Since I've accepted myself as a fruitcake, my life has changed in ways you couldn't begin to understand."

Since I've accepted myself as a fruitcake, Dave, my life has changed in ways you couldn't begin to understand. Those scary gym periods are locked in my memory, but I have a full, rich life now. I don't hate myself as much now. I have incredible friendships; I've had some amazing lovers, too. I'm not scared of you anymore, Dave, and what's more, I'm not scared of myself.

Do I still scare you, Dave?

Being involved in the lesbian and gay community has enriched my life, Dave. I've learned a lot from some great people.

Like Peter Millard, who lives life as a proud fruitcake; he doesn't put up with people like you, Dave.

Like Sally Boyle and Erin Shoemaker, who taught me that women's issues are inextricably linked with my struggle. Sally and Erin also taught me how self-love must be both the basis and the end result of political action.

Dave, I would not look you in the face or in any way acknowledge the wounds you inflicted.

People like Neil Richards, whose gentle, firm support keeps so many of us going.

Fruitcake.

The gay community has chosen to recognize me as "Man of the Year", Dave, for my involvement over the years. Much as you wouldn't understand it, Dave, this recognition affirms my very soul, that part of me you hurt so bad. Surrounded by friends and lovers, I have begun to wipe that spit off my face. I have begun to speak out about my pain, to speak *from* my pain.

And ever so slowly, Dave, that pain eases, crowded out by an abundance of love.

I'm realizing that it's not enough to answer you back, Dave. We queer folk have a much richer agenda than just wiping your spit off our faces. We fruitcakes, we faggots and dykes are inventing ourselves, creating relationships, making connections. We are all shaping our lives.

I see the snarl on your face as I write this, Dave. And guess what? I am looking you right in the eye.

MAGIC AWARDS

(Winnipeg) The Lambda Business and Professional Club of Winnipeg each year sponsors an Awards Programme to recognize significant contributions of men and women towards the well-being of the gay, lesbian and bisexual community of Manitoba. The recipients are chosen by the Awards Committee from nominations received from the community. This year the Awards Programme will bestow two first-ever awards to Association and Business Leaders. This year the Awards Ceremony, a dinner and dance, was held on November 15 in the West Ballroom of Fort Garry Place.

Eldon Keller, a long-time disc jockey and entertainer, was presented with a Magic Award in the Arts and Entertainment (performance) category. Keller was cited for shaping the sounds heard in nightclubs around Winnipeg and across Canada since the 1980s. His breadth of musical knowledge continues to influence and inspire others whether in clubs, film, broadcasting or performance.

The Community Service Award was presented to Rob Lindey for his leadership, service and dedication to the advancement of the community primarily through his commitment to the success of two organizations in Winnipeg. Lindey was involved in the formation within the Manitoba legal profession of the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Association and the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Section of the Manitoba Bar. He was also involved in leading the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Winnipeg in their journey to become a "welcoming Congregation" that affirms the lives and values of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Dr. J. R. Dick Smith was given the President's Award for Business Excellence and Community Involvement. Smith received the award for his long and continued dedication to the health and well-being of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community as a health provider and AIDS educator.

In the Arts and Entertainment (print) cat-

egory, Ian King was recognized as the founder and publisher of Winnipeg's "gay and lesbian rag," *Swerve*. Ian's resolve to establish a local newspaper has both given the community a forum to express themselves and provided the general community with an intelligent, witty and stylish introduction to gay, lesbian and bisexual issues and concerns.

The Youth Award was presented to Clarissa Lagartera for her unwavering commitment to fairness and justice issues; her advocacy, counselling, peer mentoring, social activities, campaigns and events have been of profound benefit to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people.

Pearl Kent is a director of the Manitoba Aboriginal Task Force and her work at reaching out to Aboriginal communities to dispel myths and fears by providing accurate information, sharing stories and answering questions about HIV and AIDS earned her the Magic Award for Health.

Keith Louise Fulton was recognized for the work she has done in the education field. Fulton is an outstanding scholar at the University of Winnipeg and she has been pivotal in changing the educational culture to include lesbian, gay and bisexual issues through her teaching, research, publications and the creation of courses dealing with lesbian and gay culture.

The first Manitoba Lesbigay Community Organization Award was presented to the Winnipeg Gay/Lesbian Resource Centre (WGLRC). Since its formation on the campus of the University of Manitoba in 1972, the WGLRC has provided peer counselling, a referral and information telephone line, library, speakers bureau, established various support and advocacy groups, published a wide range of pamphlets and educational materials, organized cultural events and established political and legal committees. Many groups have developed out of the Centre including a Manitoba gay and lesbian archives, the Council on Homosexuality and Religion, Winnipeg Gay Media Collective (which produced a weekly cable television program for 14 years), Gay Fathers, Gay/Lesbian Film Society, Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Youth Group, and P-FLAG.

AND THE WINNER IS...

(Saskatoon) The fourth annual Doug Wilson Award Ceremony and Reception will be held March 21, 1988 in the Quance Theatre, Education Building, University of Saskatchewan. Named in honour of the late Doug Wilson and sponsored by Gays and Lesbians at the U of S (GLUS), the award recognizes the achievements of individuals who have shown leadership and courage in advancing the rights of lesbians and gays at the University of Saskatchewan.

Neil Richards, Library Assistant at the University of Saskatchewan Main Library, has been chosen as this year's recipient. He has helped develop significant collections of gay and lesbian books, periodicals and manuscripts, and has undertaken numerous special projects and exhibitions, including many AIDS awareness initiatives. He is an avid promoter of the visual arts, and has been involved with the local gay community for many years, including participation on the Committee to Defend Doug Wilson. He helped found the Gay Academic Union at the University and was involved with the lesbian and gay Thanksgiving festival Metamorphosis. Neil, through his years of diligent work, has ensured that the history of the Saskatchewan gay and lesbian community will not disappear.

Neil Richards will be honoured at a gala ceremony highlighted by guest speaker Delwin Vriend. Vriend is a former instructor at King's University College in Edmonton. In 1991 he was fired from his Laboratory Co-ordinator position at the College because the College president learned that Vriend was gay. As a result, he initiated legal action which has led to a pending Supreme Court decision as to whether

sexual orientation should be read into Alberta's human rights code as a prohibited ground for discrimination.

The ceremony will include a performance by the Bridge City Chorus, Saskatoon's gay and lesbian choir. A wine and cheese reception accompanied by a jazz trio will follow the ceremony.

Previous years' awards have been given to Peter Millard, Professor Emeritus; Colin Clay, University Chaplain; and Madisun Browne, Regina lawyer. The award evening is a significant fund-raising opportunity for the Peter T. Millard Scholarship, named in honour of the first Doug Wilson Award recipient. GLUS has established, in co-operation with the University administration, this first ever Canadian university-administered scholarship trust fund encouraging gay, lesbian and sexual orientation studies at the University.

Tickets for the ceremony and reception can be obtained at Café Browse, Diva's, Gay & Lesbian Health Services, GLUS, Place Riel Information Centre and the USSU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Centre.

WILD ROSE AWARD WINNERS

(Calgary) It's become a tradition in most queer communities to bestow awards on individuals, and sometimes organizations, that have made significant contributions to creating a healthier lesbian and gay community. In Calgary the Wild Rose Awards have been established and will be presented every year during Pride Week.

This year, awards were presented to four individuals to recognize their important contributions. The Award of Distinction For Outstanding Contribution to the Community was presented to Bill Rutherford who has been an active part in the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays group in that city. Collin Smith, men's outreach worker for AIDS Calgary, received an award for Contributions In The Field of Advocacy or Community Service. Lorrie Murphy, of Money-Pennies, received an award for Individual Contribution to the Community and the Calgary Men's Chorus was recognized For Contributions By An Organization or Business.

Nominations for the awards are open to any individual or organization in the community and the winners are selected by a panel of community people.

CONTRIBUTIONS RECOGNIZED

(Edmonton) A number of awards were handed out during Edmonton's Pride Week to recognize contributions made by individuals, organizations and businesses towards creating a safer and healthier lesbian and gay community.

The 2000 Michael Phair Award, which recognizes exceptional contributions by a gay man, was presented to Fred Dicker. Dicker has been a stalwart of Edmonton's queer community for a number of years. He has served as a community spokesperson on various issues and has volunteered countless hours with the Edmonton Police Services Liaison Committee. He served as board chair of the Gay & Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton for the past five years and many credit that organization's current health and growth to Dicker's patient and dedicated work.

Janet Campbell was presented with the Maureen Irwin Award for her long history of involvement in Edmonton's community. She has made significant contributions to a variety of groups including Womonspace, The Edmonton Vocal Minority Choir, HIV Edmonton and the Gay & Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton. Through her involvement in the community, Campbell has also raised the profile of people with disabilities.

The Sheryl McInnes Award is given yearly for excellence in academic and scholarly work on queer lives. The 2000 winner is Garnett Epp, a professor of English at the University of Alberta (U of A). Epp has taught at the U of A since 1988 in the fields of early English literature, medieval English drama, queer theory and contemporary gay theatre.

This year a new category of Pride Awards was instituted to recognize outstanding work by a business in support of the queer community. The first Larry Sand Award was presented to the staff, management and owners of The Roost Nightclub.

Other Pride Awards were presented to Kathy DaSilva for her work in support of queer youth in the Edmonton Public

School Board; to Bert and Evelyn Frey for their work for the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in Christian denominations; to Anne McLellan, MP, the federal Minister of Justice, for her work towards passage of Bill C-23; to Graham Watts for his involvement in numerous events and activities for gay men; to Kris Wells for his work on behalf of youth within the Alberta Teacher's Association; to The Making Waves Swim Club for their encouragement of fitness and fun; to Yours, Mine, Ours and Us, the Parent's Support Group for providing resources for gay and lesbian parents and families; and to Youth Understanding Youth, for creating a safe environment for queer youth in Edmonton.

PRIDE AWARDS GIVEN

(Regina) Once again this year Regina's Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee presented five awards to individuals in recognition of contributions made to Regina's queer community. This was the third year that the annual awards were presented.

Chris Schlamp was presented with the Man of the Future award which is given to young people recently out and active in the community. Schlamp was recognized for his work with the Pride Committee and his dedication in keeping the committee's website up and running. He was also recognized for starting the regular men's potlucks which have become a popular event in Regina's gay men's community.

Pam James was presented with the Woman of the Future Award in recognition of her hard work with the Gay & Lesbian Community of Regina (GLCR). James is an open and outspoken young lesbian who has provided support for many other young dykes coming out. She has also been very active organizing events and activities with the GLCR.

Wanda Miller was given the Community Service Award for Women for her years of involvement in Regina's queer community. Miller has been an active member and organizer for the Lavender Social Club as well as a valued member of the board of the GLCR.

The Community Service for Men Award was presented to Duncan Campbell for his involvement with the Pride Committee in Regina. Campbell was also one of the initiators of the Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Health Initiatives group. In receiving his award, Campbell said he was accepting it on behalf of the many hard working members of the Pride Committee.

A special Spirit of Smith Street Award was also presented to singer Heather Bishop for her early involvement in building a visible lesbian and gay community in Regina. Bishop was one of the early organizers of the GLCR when it was situated in a house on Smith Street.

A NIGHT OF PRIDE

(Saskatoon) Gay & Lesbian Health Service's (GLHS) annual benefit concert and awards night, *Celebrating our Contributions – A Night of Pride* was an overwhelming success this year with 100 people from the queer and non-queer community in attendance. The event, which is held each year during Pride week, presents awards to people in the gay and lesbian community who have made contributions towards a strong and healthy community.

This year GLHS changed the format of the awards night, starting with a cocktail hour and a gourmet buffet. A concert featuring Calgary lesbian performer Lindsay Jane and Saskatoon performer Fran Forsberg was well received by the audience. A silent auction also ran during the event to help raise needed funds for GLHS.

This year the Woman of the Year award was presented to Bobbi Crowe in recognition of her volunteer work with GLHS as well as her work in addressing transgendered issues. This represents the first time the Woman of the Year award has been presented to a transgendered person. Crowe has been active in the Illusions group and is always available to provide support for other transgendered people as well as education to the larger community.

The Man of the Year Award was presented to Terry Bethune for his years of volunteer work in the queer community. Bethune has been a phone volunteer at GLHS and recently completed a term as a board member for that group. His dedication was illustrated by the fact that he

has a perfect attendance record at GLHS board meetings.

A Community Service award was presented to Diane Van Brabant for her work as a volunteer in the community. She has been a phone volunteer at GLHS, volunteers at various fundraising and social functions for the organization, and has served as Co-Chair of the board of directors.

The second Community Service Award was presented to Duane Minish. Minish, who works at AIDS Saskatoon, has been a phone volunteer at GLHS and currently sits on their board of directors. He often volunteers his computer expertise to various community groups and can often be found behind the scenes assisting with drag performances in the city.

Frequently the board of GLHS presents a special award to people from outside the queer community who have been supportive of the community and have worked to bring about change. This year an award was presented to Saskatoon NDP MLA Pat Atkinson for her many years of work on queer issues. Atkinson was active in the Doug Wilson case at the University of Saskatchewan in the 1970s and has been a strong advocate for the queer community in government in Regina.

The evening brought out a variety of prominent guests from Saskatoon's community. Mayor James Maddin was present and presented the awards to the recipients. Saskatoon's new police chief, Russell Sabo, and his deputy chief, Dan Wiks, were also present for the evening's events. Saskatoon NDP MLAs David Forbes and Caroline Jones were in at-

tendance to salute their colleague for her award.

"The evening saw members from the GLBT community and the greater community socializing and enjoying this recognition evening" said Bob Challis from GLHS who coordinated the evening and cooked the delicious food. "Good food, entertainment, a silent auction and good people are the perfect mix for a great evening. We can't wait for next year's GALA Awards Night. I'm sure it will be bigger and better," he added.

"LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN..."

One of the churches in my home town, when I was a kid, had a stained glass window that always caught my attention. It showed a bunch of old guys with beards (no women, of course), and written across the top was the text from *Ecclesiastes*: "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us."

And believe me England, where I grew up, was very aware of the people from its past—portraits and statues all over the place. But all this stuff wasn't just nostalgic bric-a-brac. These monuments were carrying out an important function. They were reminding us of what had happened, what we were, and how we got there... Well, the incomplete, paternalistic version, anyway.

The fact is, it is essential for every nation, every group, to know its past and the people in it if it is to have a sense of pride, and of history. That is just as true for what is sometimes referred to as "The Gay Community" as for any other group. For centuries we had to exist in silence, lurking at the fringes of society, isolated and fragmented. Now that we have achieved a measure of freedom and openness, we must find our history and in so doing affirm our identity. We must locate and honour our famous men and women.

That's why I was thrilled to hear that the University of Saskatchewan gay and lesbian group (GLUS) has decided to establish the Doug Wilson Award. Because at the local level, and to some extent the national level, Doug Wilson is a hero of the movement.

I knew Doug in the heady days of Saskatoon's Gay Community Centre—a model gay organization envied by groups across Canada. It was mainly the work of Gens Hellquist (the original and continuing hero of the local movement, but that's another story), and Doug took it over later.

Then, there was the historic battle. Doug

was a graduate student in Education at the U. of S., and he did a terrible thing. He put an ad in the student newspaper calling for the formation of a gay group on campus! Now, the Dean of Education was a gentleman named Kirkpatrick. Tall as a church steeple, Catholic as the Pope's knickers, lots of kids, a distinguished career in tennis behind him, Kirk flipped when he saw the ad. No way would he allow Doug to enter the city school classrooms to supervise his education students.

The poor man didn't know what he had started. Doug had many friends, both gay and straight, and they organized them-

It is essential for every nation, every group, to know its past and the people in it.

selves immediately. A long, wonderful battle raged throughout the entire campus and, take my word for it, the administration were outclassed, out-manoeuvred, and made to look like ninnies. It was, in all, a marvellously educational experience for everyone, which is kind of nice to think that Kirkpatrick finally did make some sort of contribution to education, even if it was unwillingly.

We won, but Doug left the university and went on to do work in human rights (he was Director of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Association when I was the President) and did great work there. Then, in Toronto, he kept up active work in gay rights and human rights generally.

The "Doug Wilson Affair," as it was known during the row at the U. of S., made Doug Wilson famous. He made the national news, and his picture appeared on the front page of the great, now defunct *Body Politic*. I'm told, by the way, that printing the photo of Doug made

circulation jump by 30%. That's because he was young, good-looking, and god knows, charismatic.

I'm not about to canonize Doug Wilson. He had his faults. He had a very powerful effect on most people, and it seemed that you were either fanatically for him, or strongly averse to him. If you belonged to the latter camp, he was not likely to spare you. He was the star and he did not like competition. Well, of course Doug had his limitations—he was only human—but the fact remains that with his courage and determination he achieved an astonishing amount of good in his lifetime for the gay cause and for human rights.

Doug met and fell in love with the wonderfully gifted Peter McGehee, a manic spell-binder from Arkansas, of all places. Half an hour with Peter and you felt as if you'd knocked back four glasses of bubbly in quick succession. Amongst other things, the crazy boy set up and sang in the deliciously subversive *Quinlan Sisters* revue, and wrote some lively novels and short stories. But whom the gods love die young. Doug nursed Peter through his illness and watched him die of AIDS. It was not very long before Doug followed him.

And Dean Kirkpatrick? Guess what happened to him. No, he didn't die of AIDS. Three or four years ago the U. of S. (Let us now praise famous men) gave him an honorary doctorate, god knows what for. Good luck to him. I'm not really bitter; it just make me all the more happy to see us honour our own. It's high time.

Forget Kirkpatrick and let's think of ourselves. This is what I want you to do. Next time you have yourself a drink, just pause a moment, and raise your glass to Doug Wilson and Peter McGehee, and all the other illustrious lavender ghosts. Look towards the sky, and send a little "Thankyou," up, up, up, over the rooftops, through the clouds, on into the stratosphere, and beyond. *

POSITIVELY QUEER

"We have cooperated for a very long time in the maintenance of our own invisibility. And now the party is over."
– Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet*.

From April 7–9, 1995 Positively Queer will be presenting Saskatchewan's First Queer Film and Video Screening Event. With funds raised from arts granting agencies and through volunteer labour, this three-day event will highlight a range of international, national and regional work.

There has been a strong growth in the production of queer film and videos in Canada and internationally. The Screening Event's focus will be about seeing and being seen. Since there is an audience in Saskatchewan desiring these works, then there is an indication that there is a history of absence of such work circulating through the region: an absence of our own reflection. The program will highlight a selection of early Hollywood films that reminds us (as Dorothy learned), "We've had the knowledge all along." What we've needed to be reminded of is "how to see".

While event organizers see this event offering access to the kinds of video and film they believe there is an audience for, they also see it as an important opportunity to increase public dialogue and understanding of queer existence and representation. This event will participate in the current public debates about being queer, by articulating visibility. The public will be invited to take on a queer reading of their world through presentations and a workshop adjacent to the screenings. Organizers hope to offer an understanding of the important link be-

tween video as an accessible public medium and the strong growth of queer participation in it as indicated by the many festivals emerging in Canada.

Some of the films/videos organizers hope to screen include: *Stained Glass Windows* by Zachary Longboy, *Queer Across Canada* by Maureen Bradley, *Stop The Church* by Robert Hilferty and *What Does A Lesbian Look Like* by Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan.

There will be a panel discussion dealing with issues of Queer Visibility and Queer Media Arts Practices. The discussion will be led by Ruby Dennis (Montréal-based First Nations film and video producer), David Savran (Brown University Queer Cinema theorist), and Maureen Bradley (Vancouver-based video artist).

To further articulate queer visibility, organizers are holding a workshop on Hi-8 Camcorder shooting and editing. The workshop, co-produced with Video Vérité Artist-Run Centre in Saskatoon, will be facilitated by Vancouver video artist Maureen Bradley. During this three-day

Hi-8 "guerrilla" production workshop, participants will shoot and edit short videos dealing with themes of queer visibility. The workshop will be limited to 4–6 participants and the finished videos will be screened the closing night. The integration of a video production workshop with the screening schedule is a new and exciting feature to festival programming and will add dialogue-in-process of queer media and self-representation.

The screening, presentations and workshop will take place in Saskatoon at the Mendel Art Gallery auditorium and at Video Vérité Artist-Run Centre. For more information call Positively Queer at (306) 343-4754.

"If the energy, intelligence and resistance that went into reading through the codified Queerness embedded in the history of mainstream film could be applied to the making of new films by Queers themselves, the party would be in the early stages of drafting a guest list—a guest list that would just get longer and longer every day..."—Amateur di Cosmos, *The Life of M.R.*

PERCEPTIONS

THE FIRE I'VE BECOME

(Calgary) The lack of queer images in the reel world has prompted the Of Colour collective to showcase *The Fire I've Become: Queer Canadian Only Independent Film and Video Festival*. This four-day festival, scheduled for June 21 through June 24, 1995 in Calgary, will feature a wide variety of works based on curatorial themes developed by local media artists/cultural workers.

The title *The Fire I've Become* is inspired by James Baldwin's essay *The Fire Next Time*, that urges the politically/spiritually conscious people of the world to inspire the consciousness of others. Fire is a source of energy and strength, and as queers we need to inspire hope, rage against injustice and demand unconditional change.

In the last two years, queers in Alberta have witnessed increasing virulent attacks by the provincial government on queer art (The Kiss & Tell performance at the Banff Centre for the Arts and The Fantasmagoria installation at the New Gallery among others); increasing censorship by Canada Customs (at Glad Day and Little Sister's); the lack of the provincial Legislature's awareness and action concerning the AIDS crisis in our communities; and the increase of gay/lesbian bashing has prompted the need to effect action around some of these urgent issues. This festival will feature films and videos that express the sensibility of resistance by depicting diverse, accurate/non-stereotypical images of queer culture. It will provide a forum for queer communities to explore and discuss our changing art, politics, sexuality, multiplicity, etc. Furthermore, this festival will begin to redress some of the institutionalized inequalities and lack of exhibition spaces for marginalized Canadian artists.

The Fire I've Become will also bring queer culture into the public domain. In the prairies, what is called "public" has been owned and defined by a select few where it serves to inform only mainstream consciousness. This public space is a noxious mix of xenophobic, sexist,

racist, classist and homophobic images. By "publicly" presenting and screening queer films and videos, Of Colour hopes to push the boundaries of this space to include queer culture.

Anyone who would like to submit their video or film for consideration in this festival can mail a written description of their work to festival organizers. Any individual or organization that would like to be part of this festival in anyway is welcome to volunteer. Organizers can be reached at Of Colour, c/o Gay Lines, 201 - 223 - 14th Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T2R 0G9 or by calling 403-234-8973.

A couple of recent events in my life have caused me to wonder what gay and lesbian pride is really about. Once again this year communities around the world will be celebrating the 26th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York with a huge variety of activities and events. In the larger cities of the world thousands of lesbians and gay men will participate in various activities and hundreds of thousands more will march through the streets in pride parades. There's nothing like a good party to bring queers out to celebrate.

I believe we have good cause to celebrate the progress that we have made in advancing the rights of lesbians and gay men. We have created communities in many parts of the world where it is possible for lesbians and gay men to stand up and say, "I have survived the hate and discrimination and have developed self-esteem that allows me to know I am a valuable being." We deserve to feel proud that we have been able to survive and thrive with all the rubbish that is regularly thrown at us.

Unfortunately, I think that all too often the pride we feel is conditional. We can have pride when we are in the safety of our own closed community but we better not exhibit pride when we are at work, visiting our families or out in public. If we dare to leave our comfortable little ghettos we had better straighten up to ensure survival. Is it really pride when we turn it on and off depending on the circumstances we are in?

I don't believe that pride necessarily involves marching in the streets or flying a rainbow flag from our front yard or balconies. It isn't about symbols, although symbols can help us remember who we are and where we have come from. It isn't about being strident and feeling we have to be in people's face about being queer. For me, pride is a feeling. It's having a sense of self-esteem about who we are and about our value as human beings. It's about believing that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a valid way to live and that the negative garbage that bombards us regularly is just that, rubbish. Pride isn't about what we do, it's about how we feel.

Now I know survival is a basic instinct for

all of us and flourishing as a gay man or lesbian in our society can seriously test all of our survival skills. I also know that if I exhibit pride in myself as a gay man, other people will either accept me for who I am or get out of my way. I very seldom run into someone who is going to openly challenge me because I'm gay and proud. I'm also aware that there are people who will make disparaging and derogatory remarks about me behind my back but that is more a reflection on them than it is on me. Pride is something that I own for myself and don't look for other people to bestow is on me.

All too often I hear people in our community put various conditions on pride. We can only be proud of those segments of our community that fit in or pass. We shouldn't allow leatherfolk or drag queens to be part of our proud community or at least not a visible part of it. We must become a homogeneous group that looks and acts very similar to the non-gay community. We mustn't stick out.

There are occasions when pride becomes a community manifestation. It certainly helps having a community around us that supports us in being proud about who we are. And I think we need to feel proud that there is a community that provides varying degrees of support for being who we are. Pride activities are important because they allow us to as a group to share our personal pride and to acknowledge and validate each other. Unfortunately community manifestations of pride usually only appear once a year, which I don't believe is sufficient.

A year ago I was fortunate to march in New York city with a million other queers in celebration of the 25th anniversary of Stonewall. As I walked down the hot and humid streets of New York I couldn't help wondering how many of the people marching with me took the pride they were exuding back to their city or small town. How many took that pride back to their job, their family and friends? How many of them had enough pride to write a letter to one of their elected representatives asking that politician to stand up for lesbian and gay rights? How many of them kept their pride in the closet only to be taken out and worn when

they were going out for the evening to a gay bar or club or to march in a pride parade in a distant city?

Recently I travelled to Yorkton with my co-worker to help organize a support group for lesbians and gay men in that part of the prairies. It was the third time we had driven out to help network queers in that area. Even though we know there are many gays and lesbians in the area, and that many of them knew about the meeting, only three people showed up. Not a great showing of pride, which clearly indicated to me that it's difficult for most people outside the major cities to feel pride in who they are.

I know that living as a lesbian or gay man outside the major urban centres can be frightening and it was obvious to me that gay and lesbian pride has not made it much past the city limits of those communities large enough to afford a comfortable ghetto. Which is interesting when you consider that a large number of people who comprise the out gay and lesbian community in those larger cities have come from rural areas. Many of them still have family and friends back in their home towns that they visit regularly. I suspect that all too often their pride is reserved only for the larger cities, which is unfortunate because it robs gays and lesbians in their home town from seeing that it is possible to be gay and proud.

How real is our sense of pride when we reserve it only for situations that we perceive as totally safe? How secure is that pride when we're unwilling to exhibit it in different situations? If we were more willing to let people see our pride about being lesbian or gay, we would enable other people to realize that it is possible to feel good about being queer. We would also help build a stronger community that would, in return, provide increased support for us. When I was growing up in the Baptist church I frequently was told that "pride goes before the fall," which I think is rubbish, but I was also told "what you sow, so shall you reap," which I think makes much sense. So if we sow our pride by allowing others to see it, we will be able to reap a stronger community that benefits all of us. ✱

SPOUSAL BENEFITS VICTORY

(Winnipeg) Manitoba gay activist Chris Vogel has won a 13-year battle with Manitoba legislators, when the Court of Appeal ruled that the provincial government actively discriminated against same-sex couples by not providing the same level of benefits it offers to heterosexual couples.

The ruling means that for the first time, Manitoba gays and lesbians have recognition from the courts of equal rights under the law. The court also requires that the province justify to a provincial adjudicator why it shouldn't pay spousal benefits to gay couples.

Vogel, who is employed as a provincial civil servant, has been fighting for 13 years for recognition that he and his lover are entitled to the same pension, dental, and other employee benefits enjoyed by heterosexual couples.

The original case was appealed after a lower court found that a gay partner is not a legal spouse and therefore not entitled to spousal benefits. While the Vogel case was still under appeal, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled May 25th that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, but stopped short of mandating equal pension benefits. Both judgements find the denial of benefits based on sexual orientation discriminatory.

There is a clause in the Manitoba Human Rights Code that stipulates that the provincial cabinet "may make regulations.... deemed to be bona fide and reasonable in respect of any employee benefit plan." It is now up to the Manitoba government to prove to a human rights adjudicator that there are reasonable grounds to treat gay couples differently than non-gay couples.

This new development is a big step forward for same-sex couples in Manitoba, but the danger with a court decision is that the government of the day can legislate out court decisions. Whatever the long term result, Vogel has what he was seeking: some recognition that he and others were treated unfairly because they are gay.

PERCEPTIONS

I was having a discussion with a friend a while back and during our dialogue I asked him what being gay meant to him. After thinking for a few moments, he replied that to him being gay meant oppression, discrimination and fear. I was taken aback by his response, but after thinking about it I could see where he was coming from. All too often we focus mainly on the negative aspects of being gay or lesbian instead of looking at the other side.

For me, being gay means many things and I have reached a point in life where most of those things are positive. Unfortunately, I'm not dissimilar to other people and don't always look at the many things I love about being gay. I think our community doesn't spend enough time looking at those things that are a wonderful part of being gay or lesbian.

We live in a society that dictates many rules that we are supposed to live with. There are a plethora of rules about how I, as a man, should act, feel and be and how I should relate to the world around me. Dealing with my gay feelings has forced me to examine not only myself but also those rules that are so pervasive in our society and so constricting. Because those rules were developed for heterosexual men and non-gay lifestyles I've had to examine those rules and develop my own set of rules for my life. That process has largely freed me from the constraints of conventional society and allowed me to express myself in ways that are more akin to who I am. I doubt if that would have happened if I wasn't gay.

Being gay has opened up many possibilities for me. I don't have to buy into the mythology about men being strong and not having feelings. I don't have to accept the rules about how men relate to women and as a result I have developed many close and intimate relationships with women that are free of the sexual dynamics that often dog non-gay men and women. I have discovered that I can be intimate and open with other men and

that I can openly love them.

Being gay has allowed me to escape the confines of conventional marriage. I can develop relationships with men, and women, that meet my needs. Not having to support a wife and children has meant that I can do the work that I feel drawn to rather than worry about having to secure an income that will take care of my family. There is no way I could have worked as a gay activist for the past 25 years if I had to worry about supporting a wife and kids. Working in the lesbian and gay community does not exactly pay well, if it pays at all, but I would not give up the past 25 years for anything. Being gay or lesbian allows us to be pioneers or to utilize our creative energy in ways that we find fulfilling.

One of the biggest joys that being gay has brought me has been the opportunity to know, work with, and love men and women from a huge cross-section of society. Knowing those people has enriched my life immensely. If I wasn't gay my circle of friends and acquaintances would most likely be drawn from my field of employment, my church or some other confined area. Instead, I spend time with a wide range of creative and exciting people, people who are creating lives that are largely based on what they want and need instead of based on what society expects of them.

Yes, there are times being gay can be a real pain. Discrimination, oppression, fear and loneliness are part of the community that I love, work and play in. I am constantly aware that my community has more

than its share of health and social problems but those problems don't arise from being gay or lesbian. They result from a society and culture that demands conformity and sameness. But life for heterosexual men and women isn't always a bed of roses either, if they buy into most of the regulations of life that our society rams down our throats.

I have discovered that by embracing my gayness and having pride in what I feel and who I am that I can overcome the discrimination and oppression and I certainly don't need to be fearful. Being proud of who I am and how I love and feel has been liberating for me. I wouldn't want to be heterosexual for anything in the world. It isn't who I am and it isn't what I want. I'm glad to be gay. It has opened up a world of creativity, exploration and love that I doubt would have been visible to me if I was heterosexual and living within the confining rules that are proffered by our society.

Being gay or lesbian can be a liberating experience if we allow it to be. Being gay or lesbian doesn't have to mean fear, oppression and discrimination. It can mean many wonderful things if we allow it. *

UNIVERSITY RECOGNIZES GAY ACTIVIST

(Saskatoon) The University of Saskatchewan (U of S) will be awarding their first President's Service Award to Neil Richards at Fall Convocation on October 28. The award was established by the University to recognize exceptional contributions by non-academic staff at the U of S. Award criteria include evidence of enhancement of the work environment by providing extraordinary service to the University community; inspiration, support, and respect of the endeavours of others; and distinction achieved through dedication and commitment.

Richards was nominated by a co-worker, Michael Brockbank, who cited a long list of contributions that Neil has made to the University and to the community. Included in that list of contributions were numerous activities that he has been involved in over the years to promote gay and lesbian issues on campus. The list of accomplishments also included Neil's involvement in AIDS awareness activities on campus.

Neil was raised in a small community in Ontario and obtained a degree in Library Sciences in Toronto. In 1971 he moved to Saskatoon for his first job at the library at the U of S where he has been ever since. In 1972 Neil became involved in Saskatoon's fledgling gay and lesbian community and has been a tireless worker in that community ever since.

"Most people don't realize how fortunate Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community is to have Neil Richards working in the community," said long-time activist Gens Hellquist. "Neil has always worked quietly in the background but he has made many contributions that have greatly enhanced our community. He is someone I have great respect for and I believe is one of the true pioneers of our community. He has always made generous contributions of time and money to advance the cause of lesbian and gay rights, not to mention AIDS awareness," Hellquist

added. "I consider myself very fortunate to have the opportunity to know and work with Neil." Hellquist added that Neil has been involved in the publication of *PERCEPTIONS* since its first issue.

Neil Richards is a man with many passions.

Frank Winters, Director of Libraries at the U of S, cited Neil's contributions of lesbian and gay books to the library as one reason he was deserving of the award. "Our library undoubtedly has one of the strongest and most comprehensive gay fiction collections of any library in Canada. It is a resource of which the University can be very proud and stands as a monument to Neil's dedicated and scholarly collecting passion," Winters said.

Neil is a man with many passions. For many years he has faithfully collected materials produced by gay and lesbian organizations in Saskatoon. His collecting included insuring that records of any lesbian or gay organization in Saskatoon were preserved for history. Those records were donated to the Saskatchewan Archives Board and represent a comprehensive picture of lesbian and gay life in the province over the past decades. During this year's Gay & Lesbian Pride Week Neil organized a seminar entitled *Out of The Closets and Into the Archives* held at the university archives located on campus. "I have no doubt that future generations of Saskatchewan scholars will have cause to thank Neil Richards for his presence in gathering up all these important testimonies and making sure they receive a safe home," said former Saskatoon gay activist Peter Millard in his support letter.

Neil has a voracious appetite for art, particularly Saskatchewan folk art. He has

the largest collection anywhere of paintings by Dmytro Stryjek, a Saskatchewan folk artist. He also co-curated an exhibit of Stryjek paintings which showed at the Diefenbaker Centre in Saskatoon and the Norman McKenzie Gallery in Regina in 1985 and he assisted in the preparation of two scholarly monographs published about Stryjek. Over the years Neil has donated many pictures to the art collection at the university and many more of his collection is loaned to the library where they decorate the Reference Department in the main library. He has also donated numerous paintings to AIDS Saskatoon for their yearly Art Auction to raise money for the agency.

AIDS awareness is another passion that Neil has exhibited over the years. He has co-ordinated a display of AIDS Awareness posters from around the world at the Kenderdine Gallery on campus and co-ordinated a campus-wide "A Day Without Art." He has also been involved in setting up various AIDS related displays in the library over the years to help provide accurate information on HIV and AIDS.

In his usual understated style, when asked how he felt about receiving the prestigious award, Neil did not express joy for himself but rather joy for the progress that gay and lesbian rights have made at the university over the past couple decades. "The last convocation I was at I was picketing and protesting the university's treatment of Doug Wilson. Twenty years later they are giving me an award for doing the same types of things that Doug was condemned for," he said. "It's really ironic," he added, referring to the changes that have taken place at the university.

Neil will be presented with a cash award of \$1,000 and a specially designed ring by university president George Ivany at Fall Convocation. Those who know Neil agree that the award and recognition is well deserved.

PRAIRIE PRIDE

Twenty-eight years ago this June drag queens, transsexuals and gay men rioted through the streets of New York for three nights. The riots were sparked by a police raid on The Stonewall Inn, a bar that catered to the gay and street crowd. The riots were the result of years of oppression by the police who routinely raided bars where the gay crowd hung out, carting a few each time off in their paddy wagons. The pent-up frustration of decades of oppression spilled out as the bar patrons took to the streets fighting back against the police and against a society that relegated gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people to the fringes.

Those riots provided the spark out of which the modern lesbian and gay liberation movement grew. Since then, in communities around the world lesbians,

gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people have come together each June in a celebration of pride. Pride events have become routine and in many communities enormous with hundreds of thousands of people participating. For many people it's an excuse for an enormous party.

Much has changed since that raid on The Stonewall Inn. We have made enormous gains in little over a quarter of a century. Our communities have grown with thousands of people feeling safe enough to come out and be visible to varying degrees. We have been successful in changing many of the laws that were used to deny us equal citizenship. We have developed a growing commercial community with businessmen and women providing services to our community.

Once again this June cities across the prairies will be celebrating lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered pride with a wide variety of events. The events provide an important opportunity for the various segments of our community to come together to celebrate our diversity and our strength. They provide an opportunity for us to be visible so those who still haven't found the strength can accept their orientation and to come out.

Check the listing of events below to find out what is happening near you and go out and join the celebration. We've come a long way and we need to continue to celebrate our diversity, our gains and our strength.



WINNIPEG

JUN 22: Pride '97: Rally & March: Legislative Bldg, Festival: Memorial Park, 284-5208.

SASKATOON

JUNE 16-22 For more info call 665-1224

MON 16-SAT 21: Art Show, Video Vérité, noon-5pm. 16: Opening & kickoff party, 8pm.

TUE 17: Sylvia Legris Reading, Café Browse, 8pm.

WED 18: Coming Out Party, GLHS, 8pm.

THUR 19: Self defense workshop & talk, YWCA, 7pm.

FRI 20-SUN 22: Film (TBA) Broadway Theatre.

FRI 20: Vigil, 8pm. —Mardi Gras, Rotary Park, 9pm. —"Diva's Does Pride!" 10:30pm.

SAT 21: Gala at the Ukrainian Hall: Cocktails, 6pm, Banquet, 7pm. Awards Ceremony, 8pm. Pride Dance & Silent Auction, 9pm.

SUN 22: Ecumenical Church Service, 12:30pm. —Family Day In the Park, 1:30-6pm. —Pagan Midsummer Feast, Diefenbaker Park, 6pm.

CALGARY

JUNE 14-22. For more info call Gay & Lesbian Line: 234-8973.

SAT 14: Sherri Harrington at Grabbajabba on 4th, 3pm & 8pm.

—Rocky Mountain Singers Pride Concert Orpheus Theatre: SAIT, 8pm.

SUN 15: Sunday Brunch, Chicken Hawks Bistro: 550-11th Ave SW, 11am-3pm, 263-7177.

—Alpine Frontrunners Pride Run & Walk, Eau Claire YMCA, registration: 9:30am, walk: 10:00am.

—AIDS Benefit Shows with LA's Brian Evans, Grabbajabba on 4th St, 3 & 8pm, Jackie 244-2418.

—"All God's Children" Integrity's interdenominational communion service with the Rocky Mountain singers, St. Stephen's Anglican church: 1121-14 Ave SW, 7:30pm.

WED 18: Live entertainment Coffee House, Citizen Payne: 1240 Kensington Rd NW, 8pm.

FRI 20-THU 26: Uptown Screen film: "Johns" www.flip.com/johns/index.html

SAT 21: "The Biggest Pride Dance Ever" with the Ed Waillins' Band, NOT at Mewata Armoury as before but at Nashville North: Stampede Grounds, 8pm.

SUN 22: Pride Rally & Parade, McDougall Centre, 3pm. Followed by BBQ & Resource Fair, Victoria Park Hall, 5pm.

EDMONTON

JUNE 21-28. "Celebrate Our Diversity and Pride!" For more info call Fred 469-7231 or Roz 482-1794.

SAT 21: MCC & Lambda Ecumenical Service, Gazebo Park, 988-3913 or 429-2321.

—Womospace Pride Dance, Bonnie Doon Community Hall: 9240-93 St, 8pm, 482-1794.

—Northern Chaps Solstice Party, Boots'n' Saddle.

SUN 22: Pride Festival Day with Delwin Vriend & Julie Lloyd & Edmonton Vocal Minority, Gazebo Park: 83 Ave & 104 St, followed by Parade.

—PFLAG Picnic, festival & women vs men football game, Rolie Miles Athletic Field: 104 St & 75 Ave, 4pm.

TUE 24: "After You Come Up for Air - Couples Talk" workshop, Unitarian Church: 12530-110th Ave, 7-9pm.

—"Celebrating Safer Sex" GMOC & AIDS Network workshop for men, 488-5742.

WED 25: GMOC Reunion, Roost, 9pm, 488-5742.

—"Girl Me Safely" women's workshop, AIDS Network, 488-5742.

THUR 26 & FRI 27: Nu Queer Testings Images Festival, films at Edmonton Art Gallery: 2 Sir Winston Churchill Square, 7 & 8pm respectively.

THUR 26: "60's Songs of Freedom & Protest" Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose fundraiser for GLCCE, Boots'n'saddle, 10pm.

FRI 27: Gala Fundraising Dinner for EPOCH Project, Delta Hotel, 6pm, Edmonton & district foster family assoc: 226-8205-90 Ave T6C 1N8 or Catherine 461-8803.

—Natalie Barney Literary Salon Event, literary extravaganza with costumes & impersonations, Orlando Books: 10640 Whyte Ave, 7:30pm, 432-7633.

—"Girl Me" Dance, Catalyst Theatre, 9pm.

SAT 28: Family Potluck Picnic, Hawrelak Park, 2-5pm, 488-5742.

—"Decades of Pride" with Edmonton Vocal Minority Concert: "Boys & Girls With Stories" and Pride Awards, Convocation Hall: U of A, 8pm, 988-4620.

No PROCLAMATION

(Regina) The Queen City is hosting its first Lesbian and Gay Pride Week since 1990. The eight days of pride activities begin July 24 with the first annual Regina Q-Ball community dance. The HOMO MOMA Art show opens on July 25 and runs through until July 31. Some of the other activities planned include a gay/lesbian pride picnic with a "fags versus the dykes" softball game, a family fun night at an amusement arcade, and the Buffalo Gays group visit to the Buffalo Days Exhibition.

A series of workshops will also be held on a variety of topics including Building Healthy Relationships, Police Responses to Violence Against Lesbians and Gays, and Domestic Violence in Lesbian & Gay Relationships. The Oscar Wilde Troupe will also stage a production of *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me* at the Gay/Lesbian Community of Regina (GLCR).

Committee spokesperson Duncan Campbell said a number of people came forward to work on the pride committee, helping to plan and organize the many events. The committee works under the auspices of the GLCR who have provided funding for the various events although the committee operates separately. Campbell said the committee is considering becoming independent for next years event.

The Pride Committee approached Regina's City Council seeking a proclamation but they were turned away with the excuse that

an existing bylaw prevents the mayor from issuing a proclamation for pride week. In 1990 Regina's council of that time did issue a proclamation for Pride Week, but after council members were besieged with homophobic phone calls from people angry about council's decision, a new bylaw

*"We don't feel
like an issue,
we feel like a
people."*

- Duncan Campbell

was enacted. That bylaw gives discretionary power to the mayor on issuing proclamations especially ones promoting business ventures, supporting hate groups or on anything that is considered of a sexual or politically sensitive nature.

"I think they took the easy way out," said Campbell. They could have issued the proclamation as it allows the mayor to use his discretion. This council showed the same lack of courage as did the 1990 council who enacted the bylaw that they are using as an excuse."

Campbell said Mayor Doug Archer claimed that the issue was a political one so his hands were tied. "We don't feel like an issue, we feel like a people," Campbell added.

Archer assured the committee that council would amend the bylaw and do it quickly so a similar situation won't arise next year. He added that council might have no alternative but to ban all proclamations unless councillors can reach agreement on a new bylaw. Most councillors seem to recognize that the bylaw is in conflict with Saskatchewan human rights legislation that bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Campbell said the issue has become a hot topic in Regina. Some in Regina's lesbian and gay community are worried that the public discussion of pride week will lead to more bashings. Most major media outlets have covered the story and CBC radio held an open-line program to ask the question: "Have attitudes about lesbians and gay men changed?"

Campbell also recounted an episode when he was approached by an older woman in the mall. "I saw you on TV," she said. She then told Campbell that she had left her husband six years ago and was finally considering coming out. She asked where the march was as she wanted to join. When informed that there was no march she assured Campbell that she would see him at the dance.

DAZZLING PRIDE WEEK IN REGINA

(Regina) Regina's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Pride Week, which ran from June 18 through June 26 (9 days in all) of this year, was widely judged to be the best to date. In general, the events of the week drew enthusiastic crowds. Police protection for the most public events ensured a feeling of safety, and in general, the media was attentive and respectful.

The week started with the opening ceremony in the Scarth Street Mall in downtown Regina, where politicians such as MLA Joanne Crofford and City Councillor Fred Clipsham expressed their support. (The Mayor, who had signed the Proclamation of Pride Week for 1999 and retroactively for 1998, was notably absent.) Several Pride Committee members gave short speeches, and activist Lyndon Surjik, formerly of Regina, gave a fascinating first-hand account of the struggle for "gay rights" in Saskatchewan,

and of the history of Pride Week in Regina. Lyndon, who had been flown in by the Pride Committee from his current home in Vancouver, introduced his beaming family. Then a rainbow-coloured ribbon (sewn by a clothing designer on the Pride Committee) was cut to mark the official opening of Pride Week.

Most of those present at the ceremony immediately went to the opening of "Homosaic," an art exhibit in Neutral Ground art gallery facing the Scarth Street Mall. Because of a shortage of space, all the art works had to be approximately the size of a sheet of typing paper, but most had an impact out of proportion to their size. Viewers were invited to record their comments (or other graffiti) as part of the display.

On Saturday, June 19, a LesBiGay Health Fair was held in the Saskatchewan Government Employees Union building. Health care providers advertised their services and provided information, and the "Street Kids" project from North-Central Regina sold soft drinks and snacks. LIFE (Little Improvs for Education), the drama group of AIDS Regina, put on several skits on the subject of physical and emotional boundaries. Participants/visitors to the fair were asked to answer a questionnaire which will be used to help determine the need for health care (in the broadest sense) in the lesbian/gay community of Regina.

That evening, the monthly women's dance, organized by the Lavender Social Club, was held in the basement of the new Community Centre at 2070 Broad Street, downstairs from the bar. By all accounts, the first women's dance in the new space was a success despite the still-unfinished look of the space which was somewhat disguised by the dim light, provided by candles on the tables.

On Sunday, June 20, a wiccan Solstice ceremony was held near a waterfall in a city park. This event, which was open to

the public, attracted a diverse group of fifteen people of both sexes, several sexual orientations, and a range of ages. The weather was beautiful, and all expressed appreciation for the summer.

The ceremony was followed by a day in the park, including a picnic meal and various games, including watersports (a squirt-gun war), a scavenger hunt, Red Rover and a high-heel race made challenging by the rule that no could bring and wear their own—shoes were provided by the organizing committee. That evening, the local branch of Dignity (lesbigay Catholics) held a potluck supper.

On June 21, a Coming-Out Party was held at Jack's Attic, the upper floor of Roca Jack's coffee bar. Those who had the courage to tell their coming-out stories were rewarded with personalized certificates. An impressive range of experience was described, and several participants expressed the hope that this event could be the beginning of a storytelling tradition in our community.

Earlier that day, Alex Docking of CKTV interviewed two members of the Regina Pride Committee on television. He shocked the committee members (as well as many viewers) when he asked them whether the first proclamation of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Pride Week in Regina would pave the way for a proclamation of "Paedophiles' Week." He also accused one of the interviewees of using "vitriolic language" on anyone who disagreed with him after the interviewee had described the opponents of Pride Week as "homophobic," a term that several of those opponents had publicly applied to *themselves* in 1998 when the issue was being debated in meetings of Regina City Council.

This writer was quickly authorized by the committee to draft a letter of protest to be sent to the General Manager of CKTV, with a copy to Docking. By the time the
(continues on next page...)

(continued from previous page...)

letter was ready for signing by 10:00 the following day. Docking and the television station had already been deluged with e-mails and phone calls criticizing Docking's inappropriate suggestion that lesbian pride was somehow associated with the sexual abuse of children. Docking himself, as well as the station manager, apologized in writing for the "misunderstanding," and arranged for a second interview, which focused on the events of the week.

On June 22, a women's coffeehouse on the theme of "Women's Work" was held at the community centre. It was dedicated to the memory of Sunny Thompson, Joanne Crofford's daughter, who had read a poem at last year's coffeehouse and who died this year of cancer at the age of 29. Sunny's vibrant presence was sorely missed by those of us who knew her, and we were moved by the presence of Joanne and Sunny's young daughter Serena, who was allowed to stay up past her bedtime for this event.

On June 23, there was a book launch at the local Chapters bookstore for *Women Together*, a lavish book of photos of lesbian couples with accompanying text. It includes several relatively famous couples, as well as more obscure but equally interesting women. On the same evening, the Community Centre hosted a showing of *Community Building*, a witty documentary by local filmmaker Glen Wood about the history/herstory of Regina's lesbian community which climaxed (so to speak) in the efforts involved in getting the current space ready for its opening.

The Smith Street Reunion, held in a private home on June 24, brought older and newer members of the community together. Those who remembered "the house on Smith Street," the first gay meeting-place in Regina which opened in 1972, reminisced with each other and passed on some local history to those who hadn't been there.

A brief march from Victoria Park to Regina City Hall on the evening of June 25 was followed by an outdoor candlelight vigil for all the victims of hate crimes, including homophobic violence. Participants were asked to place ribbons on a

wreath in memory of those we miss. Later, the community centre hosted "Heaven or Las Vegas," an evening of "gambling" with play money (featuring the photos of local drag performers) which was provided by the establishment. Various prizes could be "bought" with the winnings.

The last evening of Pride Week, June 26, featured a gala awards ceremony at which two outstanding members of the community (one male, one female) were honoured along with a "Man and Woman of the Future," two community members under age 25 who showed promise. The ceremony, held in one of the largest of Regina's neighbourhood centres under an arch of balloons in rainbow colours, was followed by a well-attended dance.

EDITORIAL

I've read a couple of articles lately that suggest that Lesbian and Gay Pride events are passé and no longer needed in our communities. One author suggested they're a throw-back to the late '60s when queers rioted in the streets on New York. He went on to suggest that we've now achieved equality and no longer need to parade our proclivities in public. Of course, he lived in a large city where he could escape to the comfort of a safe queer ghetto.

Another author claimed Pride parades just highlight our differences from those heterosexuals. All those drag queens, leathermen, buffed bar boys, and dykes on bikes just get in the way of our fitting in. Yes, and what is your point? I'm not interested in emulating heterosexuality and fitting in, as are many of my queer friends. Many of my non-gay friends aren't interested in fitting in. Of course, he too lived in a large urban centre and obviously hasn't spent much time lately in the real world.

I believe Pride Parades and other events are more important now than ever. As our community diversifies we have few opportunities to come together as queer people and celebrate our diversity and celebrate the spaces we have carved out of hate and intolerance.

I'm also struck by how many people still do not realize that there is a vibrant queer community on the Canadian prairies. I've worked with countless people in the past year who are struggling with coming out issues and who never knew there was an organization in their community that would provide them with support and information. We work at maintaining a fair degree of visibility but we're still hidden from so many. It's amazing how the closet can blind us to the possibilities right outside that closet door. Homophobes seem to have no problems finding us.

Pride events are still a vital part of building and maintaining our communities. Invisibility has always been the killer in our midst and Pride events provide one more means of becoming more visible in our communities. They also send a powerful message to society that yes we are different but we are willing to embrace and celebrate our differences.

This year Saskatoon and Regina are working together to co-ordinate our pride celebrations which will involve a joint parade in Regina, with the parade moving to Saskatoon next year. Wouldn't it be grand if we could tour that parade to smaller communities throughout the province to let queer, and non-queer, people know we exist all over the province? Maybe there's a Canada Council grant available for something like that.

SASKATCHEWAN PRIDE 2000:



**Pride Week 2000 is
June 24th - July 1**

**Absolute Pride 2000!
Saskatoon's Lesbian & Gay Pride Week**

**Look at all of the
great events during
Pride Week!**



Events !

Saturday, June 24:

Province wide, Saskatchewan Pride
Parade in Regina

Sunday, June 25:

Interdenominational, multi faith Vigil

Monday, June 26:

Arts Café & Queer Pride Art
Exhibition opening

Tuesday, June 27:

Coming OUT Party

Wednesday, June 28:

"Gay Old Time" History night

Thursday, June 29:

"Gays & Lesbians In Film, oh my!"
all day film festival

Friday, June 30:

Gala Awards Night, Concert
and Silent Auction

Saturday, July 1:

Family Day in the Park

Evening: Absolute Pride Dance



Gay & Lesbian
Health Services,
Saskatoon

For event details contact GLHS (665-1224)/(1-800-358-1833)
e-mail: glhs@home.com or see "Events on the Prates" in Perceptions. Pick
your FREE guide to pride at gay owned, operated business, Available early June.

You're invited to join Saskatchewan gays, lesbians, bisexuals, their families and allies at the historic, first-ever, province-wide celebration of pride...



Saskatchewan Gay/Les/Bi Pride Parade

June 24, 2000 in Regina

Bring your grandma, your parents, your gay kids, your boss, your best friends, co-workers—*anyone* who believes in celebrating diversity and promoting gay/les/bi pride. Decorate a Pride float & wear your rainbow spirit colours. Walk, run, wheel, drive or ride in the parade and come out to celebrate Saskatchewan Pride!

March Info

assemble: 1:30-2pm @ Regina Union Centre, 2709 12th Avenue (corner of 12th and Angus) Regina.

parade start time: 2pm

route: East on 13th Ave. then south on Albert St., ending at the Legislature with guest speakers. Will the Premier be there? You'll have to show up to find out...

what to bring: Your pride, a float, a banner, your dog, a rainbow pride costume, a "proud parent of a gay kid" sign, a sign showing your home town to tell the province that we're here, we're queer and we come from all-over, or whatever else helps you celebrate pride!

4 More Info

Regina Gay/ Les/ Bi Pride Committee

e: pride-regina@gaycanada.com www.gaycanada.com/pride-regina

G.L.H.S., Saskatoon

e: glhs@home.com toll free: 1-800-358-1833

Coming in from Out of Town?

1. The Plains Hotel: 1965 Albert Street, Regina, 306-757-8661, for pride discount book by June 10.

2. College West Residence: 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina, 306-585-4777. When booking remember to say you are here for Pride Week.

3. Billeting: A limited number of billets in homes are available. Call Chelsea at 306-525-1699 by June 19th.

4. Two-Spirit Guest Ranch: A half hour outside Regina. 306-731-2200 or www3.sk.sympatico.ca/womren

5. Campsites: 50 Plus Campground, Hwy 1E-781-2810
Buffalo Lookout Campground, Hwy 1E-525-1488,
King's Acres Campground, Hwy 1E-522-1619

a joint project of



Gay & Lesbian Health Services

PRIDE REMEMBRANCES

by Gens Hellquist

As I stood on the *front* steps of the Saskatchewan Legislature during the recent Pride rally, I couldn't help but reflect on how much has changed in the past three decades. Here I was with nearly 400 other queer folk, along with our straight but not narrow allies, celebrating our lives in front of the legislative body that didn't see fit to recognize and acknowledge our lives on this important day. We were sending a loud and public message that queer people exist in this province and expect nothing less than the right of full and unfettered participation in the life of our province.

I thought back a decade when I last participated in a public Pride march in Regina. In 1990 there were perhaps a hundred of us marching through downtown Regina, calling for change. Many of those 100 wore masks to illustrate the real fear of being discovered to be queer in Saskatchewan. No one in this most recent crowd felt it necessary to wear a mask on this day. Things have indeed changed.

I was struck by the diversity and pride of the crowd in front of that building that houses those who would be our leaders. The lack of a Pride flag flying in front of that building clearly indicated there wasn't much leadership in that house. The real leadership was assembled on the front steps.

I looked out and saw queer youth who have had the luxury of coming out into a more open and accepting society, although coming out is still a struggle for most. I saw mature lesbians and gay men who came out in harsher times and whose journeys of self-acceptance and visibility have paved the way for so many. I saw non-gay allies from the union movement who have recognized that homophobia is very much a workplace issue. I saw parents of queer kids who have struggled against the myths and lies to see and love their queer child. I saw children of queer parents who live the truth that is their parents' life. I saw allies from various faith communities who prove that god and goddess really is all about love.

Indeed, much has changed and our progress towards equality is still being won in counts and in hearts around the world. The painful struggles for safety and belonging I experienced growing up in Saskatchewan is no longer the norm for many gay men, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered folk. We have changed this province and country.

However, as I looked out I was also reminded of how some things still remain the same. I kept seeing the religious fascist who had organized a counter parade, coincidentally on the same day, on the same route as us, and then followed our parade of love, shooting away with his camera. Strangely no one remembers

seeing him reload his camera but getting a keepsake of our diverse and proud community wasn't the issue. The old religious trick of intimidation was really the purpose behind his antics. He is not alone in his belief that he should have the right to control the lives of others because his Bible tells him so.

As I looked across the celebrating crowd, the absence of so many faces reminded me that in other ways things still haven't changed much. One of my earliest memories of the queer community in Saskatoon was the shadow of death that is part of our community.

Too many people that worked hard for this day are no longer with us because of suicide, early death from substance abuse or AIDS. We still live in an environment where we lose too many of our chosen family too soon.

With all the victories we've won and the gains we've made, one constant remains: unacceptable levels of homophobia which still kills us in large numbers. A couple of suicides in recent weeks remind me that spectre is still with us. Reading between the lines of a few obituaries lately reminds me that queer youth are still opting to die rather than live with who they are and the intolerance they perceive in the world.

Having just returned from meetings in Toronto and Ottawa about HIV/AIDS issues reminds me that we're still losing people through AIDS. And in case anyone thinks the epidemic is going away, they need look no further than the recent stats on HIV infections to see infection rates beginning another alarming rise in queer communities such as San Francisco and Toronto. What happens in those queer meccas quickly makes its way to all our communities.

The last half of the last century saw us bring about enormous change in the climate that we live in as laws have been changed and hearts and minds have been opened. Work still must be done in this new century to broaden our gains.

There are many signs that indicate that we are changing focus to address homophobia and the lives that it takes. There is a growing and increasingly more visible queer health movement that looks at our lives in holistic ways to address some of the core issues that place us at risk. Health is no longer seen as an issue solely focused on disease but rather on our emotional, mental, spiritual and physical health. This movement is not new, having been around since the early 1970s in many of our communities. Community organizations that provide support and information to our community were overtaken and overshadowed when AIDS hit our communities. The value of those organizations in our lives is becoming better recognized by the policy makers and politicians

(Please see *Remembrances* on page 6)

Remembrances

although that process has just barely begun. The value of those organizations has always been understood by those who used them to find safety and improve the quality of their lives.

AIDS organizations are recognizing that prevention involves more than urging people to use condoms and castigating them when they don't. People take risks for many complex reasons and the complexities of HIV prevention are beginning to be better understood. Discussion is occurring at many levels across the country to better understand why infection rates continue to rise instead of dropping in the queer community. These discussions will lead to more focused programs that better enable people at risk to assume control over their health and sexuality.

The next few years are going to be exciting as we solidify our gains and stem the tide of death that has been so much a part of our community. I, for one, am excited about the possibilities. *P*

NEWS

PRAIRIES

PRAIRIE PRIDE

(Regina) Despite the refusal of the provincial government to issue a proclamation for Pride Day on June 24, nearly 400 people showed up to parade through the streets of Regina in the first ever provincial Pride march in Saskatchewan. The off and on again rain did not deter the colourful, albeit somewhat soggy, marchers who paraded down Albert Street from 12th Avenue to the provincial Legislature.

This was the first year that Pride organizers in Saskatoon and Regina decided to coordinate their Pride Weeks so they didn't conflict and to stage a joint provincial march. Next year the Pride parade will be winding its way through the streets of Saskatoon.

A large contingent of people drove down from Saskatoon to participate in this historic event. Marchers included members of United and Unitarian Churches from Saskatoon and Regina, and representatives of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

The Regina Police Services escorted marchers along the route in stark contrast to a decade ago when then police chief Ernie Reimer refused a permit for a Pride march. Initially police wanted the marchers to stay on the sidewalks along the route but when organizers presented them with estimates of the numbers expected

to attend police allowed the parade to proceed down the west side of Albert Street.

Of course the Religious right could not allow the parade to occur without making their presence known. About 20 participants from the Christian Truth Activists held their own parade before the queer parade was scheduled. "We think it's really important that, at the same time,

*"This was the best
and most successful
Pride week we've
ever had."*

**-Duncan Campbell
Regina Pride Committee**

we have a parade that emphasizes biblical family values," said Dianne Richardson, spokesperson for the religious group who appeared during the debate over funding for the Queer City Cinema held in Regina in May. A member of the fundamentalist group followed the Pride parade along its route snapping pictures, although no one ever saw him reload his camera.

The parade ended up at the front steps of

the Saskatchewan Legislature where a raucous rally was held. Speakers including Regina Police Chief Cal Johnston, PFLAG member Kay Williams, NDP MLA Mark Wartman (who's also a United Church minister), longtime activist Gens Hellquist, and EGALE board member Murray Billett addressed the crowd. Most speakers condemned the provincial government for their refusal to issue a proclamation.

Johnson told the crowd that he felt it was important for police to uphold fundamental freedoms including the freedom of speech, thought and assembly. "I think that Regina's a fairly free and open community and I think it's important to respect the rights of people to gather like this and express their point of view."

Following the parade and rally, Regina's Pride Committee held their awards ceremony and closing dance with record numbers in attendance. Regina's Pride events were the most successful in the history of that community, with a huge increase in attendance at all the events.

"This was the best and most successful Pride week we've ever had," said Pride Committee spokesperson Duncan Campbell. "We were also amazed at the support we received from outside the gay and lesbian community," he added. "We had numerous non-gay organizations calling about ways they could get involved."

NO PRIDE FOR NDP

(Regina) Gay and lesbian activists in Saskatchewan were outraged when the provincial NDP government refused to issue a proclamation for Lesbian And Gay Pride Day to coincide with a provincial pride march. While city councils in both Regina and Saskatoon issued proclamations for Lesbian and Gay Pride Week this year, and the rainbow flag flew in front of both city halls during the corresponding Pride Weeks, the NDP government was unwilling to recognize gays and lesbians in the province.

Regina's Pride Committee was stunned when they received a letter from the government refusing a proclamation with the excuse that proclamations are reserved for groups and issues that affect all the province. Regina's Pride Committee, who were handling the request for a proclamation on their behalf as well as Saskatoon's Pride Committee, wrote back suggesting that gay and lesbian people lived across the province and that homophobia indeed did affect everyone in the province. The government still refused to issue a proclamation, citing guidelines established by the Grant Devine government in the 1980s that suggested the government stay away from proclamations on issues of "sexuality, a personal nature and religion."

"This is absolutely ludicrous," said Gens Hellquist of Gay & Lesbian Health Services in Saskatoon. "They have issued proclamations for a whole host of things including Petroleum Technology Week and Soil Conservation Week. Apparently we're lower than dirt and oil in the eyes of some members of our government," Hellquist said.

Inside sources seemed to indicate all was well on its way for the proclamation to be issued when it received a positive response in caucus. Some observers have speculated that it was only when Premier Roy Romanow returned to caucus that the proclamation was nixed.

Many members of the NDP caucus were also upset over the refusal of their government to issue a proclamation for Lesbian And Gay Pride Day. Regina NDP MLA Joanne Crofford paid for an ad in

the *Regina Leader Post* sending her "Best wishes for a great event." The headline in the ad read, "In Solidarity and Celebration." Qu'Appelle NDP MLA Mark Wartman spoke at the rally on the Legislature following the pride parade. When Regina's Pride Committee passed out rainbow pins to MLAs, most of the NDP MLAs wore their pins in the Legislature.

The debate took a bizarre twist when Saskatchewan Party MLA June Draude told the media that her party was in support of the government issuing a proclamation. Draude had spent two weeks earlier castigating the government for a Saskatchewan Arts Board grant given to Queer City Cinema in Regina to support their queer film/video festival. The next day Draude was taken to task by party leader Elwin Hermanson who said his party did not support a proclamation. "The party has never dealt specifically with proclamations, particularly on moral issues," he said. Draude was the only member of the Saskatchewan Party to take advantage of the free rainbow pins to wear in the Legislature.

Reaction to the refusal was quick with Regina's Pride Committee lodging a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. A few days later Saskatoon's Pride Committee also filed a complaint with the Commission.

"The province passed legislation in 1993 adding sexual orientation as a protected grounds against discrimination in the human rights code and they've made a decision not to allow a Pride Day, citing that it doesn't benefit all Saskatchewan people," said Erin Scriven, spokesperson for Saskatoon's Pride Committee. "We want to explain to them that this is a provincial day and it does in fact benefit all Saskatchewan people," she added.

Even though they did not get a proclamation from the province, the provincial Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade went on anyway. (See article this issue.)

FLYING PROUD

(Saskatoon) For the first time ever the rainbow Pride flag flew in front of Saskatoon's City Hall during Pride Week. Not only did Saskatoon's city council agree to proclaim Pride Week but they also authorized the flying of the Pride flag.

"Being in my own community and having a symbol of who I am flying at City Hall is a life-changing experience," said Erin Scriven, spokesperson for Saskatoon's Pride Committee. "This is a very important day because there are still so many people afraid to come out because they fear they will be rejected by family and co-workers. This public symbol of support is very powerful," she added.

The flag was raised in a brief ceremony in front of City Hall on Monday June 26, the start of Pride Week in Saskatoon. City Councillor Patricia Roe spoke at the ceremony on behalf of the city. "We're very happy to do this for the gay and lesbian community because they are doctors, lawyers, parents, teachers and ministers who

play a vital role in the city's development," Roe said. "To single them out as not being worthy of recognition is not appropriate."

Roe also took the provincial government to task for their refusal to issue a provincial proclamation for Pride Week, calling their refusal "short-sighted. All I can say is this city is trying to lead by example. I hope that will change in time. It gives them the same rights that every other citizen has and that's all they're asking for."

The Pride flag continued to fly in front of City Hall for the entire week. Seeing the Pride flag flying in front of City Hall was a moving experience for many people. "This is one more sign that lesbian and gay people exist in our city and are an important component of this community," said Gens Hellquist, executive director of Gay & Lesbian Health Services, who were heavily involved in organizing Pride Week activities. "It's a wonderful way to begin a new millennium."

The unfurling of the flag kicked off an-

other successful Pride Week in Saskatoon. The annual Art Show and Arts Café was held on Monday night with a large crowd in attendance. Other events included a Coming Out Party where coming out certificates were presented to those who had come out in the past year, a history night where *Proud Past — Saskatoon's Gay & Lesbian History*, a video by Anna Wood, was previewed. In her video Wood interviews a number of activists from Saskatoon's queer community. A day of queer videos and films was held Thursday at Gay & Lesbian Health Services and the Broadway Theatre.

Attendance was down this year for the annual Pride Concert and Awards Ceremony and the wrap-up dance held on Saturday. Competition from the Joni Mitchell opening at the Mendel Art Gallery and the Jazz Festival kept people away as did the long weekend with many people leaving town for the lake or the gay rodeo in Calgary.

Plans will begin shortly for next year's Pride events. In 2001 the provincial Pride parade will be held in Saskatoon.

2001 Saskatchewan Pride Parade



Take Pride in Your Community

and participate in the 2001 Saskatchewan Pride Parade in Saskatoon! All gay and gay-supportive organizations, businesses, and individuals are welcome to participate.

	Build a	
Sew a	float...	Show your
banner...		pride!

Saturday, June 23rd

1:00pm. Saskatoon. SK

Marshalling begins in YWCA parking lot at noon.

Rally to follow at Spadina Bandshell

For more information or entry registration forms, please see one of our brochures,
call (306) 665-1224, email prideweek@hotmail.com, or
visit <http://www.gaycanada.com/saskatoon-pride/index.htm>

A REALLY BIG SHOW

(Saskatoon) In conjunction with Saskatoon's Pride celebrations, the University of Saskatchewan Libraries will host a retrospective exhibition of Saskatchewan artist/designer Marilyn Cooper during June in its Link Gallery. Cooper is a self-confessed fag hag, the label often derisively applied to heterosexual women who devote considerable energies to their relationship with gay men.

Over the past decade, Cooper has produced a large body of work which documents and celebrates the lives of her friends, mostly young gay men in Saskatoon and Regina. Her brightly coloured paintings will be familiar (at least in black and white) to readers of *Perceptions*, where they have been published as cover illustrations on dozens of issues. She has also undertaken many commissions for individuals and organizations in the gay/lesbian community including the Pride committees in both Regina and Saskatoon, Diva's, Gay & Lesbian Health Services and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (Toronto).

This first solo exhibition features many small paintings and a representative selection of commercial design work, including published bookcovers, magazine illustrations, painted and printed clothing, calendars, and a life-size merman lantern in paper-mâché, produced for Regina's annual Lanterns on the Lake festival.

Exhibition curator Neil Richards welcomed the opportunity to show Cooper's work. "I've always admired Cooper's work, for its charm and gentle humour, as well as for its technical accomplishments. Our community has been fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated chronicler," Richards said. The positive and optimistic character of her work seems to Richards a welcome antidote to the grimness and angst of much of the artwork that is shown as representative of our communities. Richards believes that this show, entitled *A Friend of Dorothy's*, will offer straight viewers a humorous and provocative introduction to gay life in our province, and will provide gays and lesbians with a look back at many of the institutions and individuals who have

impacted our movement ahead over the past decade.

The exhibition is co-sponsored by *Perceptions*, GLUS and the USSU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Centre. It can be viewed on the first floor of the University Main Library in June during Library hours: Weekdays 8 to 5, Sundays 1 to 5. Everyone is invited to attend the exhibition's free public reception, "The Pink Tea Party," on Thursday June 21, 3 to 4:30 pm.

'TOON TOWN PRIDE

(Saskatoon) For the second year in a row, the Rainbow Pride flag flew in front of Saskatoon City Hall during Pride Week and Council also proclaimed Pride Week in the city of Saskatoon. The flag was raised in a brief ceremony in front of City Hall on Monday, June 18, the official start of Pride Week (it had started unofficially with Family Day in the Park on Sunday). Mayor Jim Madden kicked off the week with a short speech, as well as comments from GLHS executive director Gens Hellquist. City councillor Patricia Roe was also in attendance, showing her support.

The event was sparsely attended in the actual square, but many friends could be seen watching from a distance. The Pride flag continued to fly all week. "It's truly a moving experience seeing the Pride flag flying in the square. Personally, it was satisfying to take that extra time to have a look at the flag daily," said co-Pride Chair Kirby Bell. "I would also personally like to take the time to thank all the departments of the City that we dealt with; all were extremely co-operative and helpful."

Family Day in the Park was the actual kick-off on Sunday, and looked as if it was to be cancelled, but the rain stopped just before noon. Families attended the BBQ, playing games, having a gay ol' time and the first ever book drive has brought some great queer books to the GLHS library. The Arts Café was held at the Basement, showcasing queer talent and art from within the community, with an enthusiastic crowd on hand enjoying the performers and an excellent variety of art.

Other Pride Week events included a Coming Out party where certificates were presented to those who have come out in the past year. The G & L history wall at GLHS was also updated as a reminder how far we have come in Saskatoon. A poetry reading was held at Titles bookstore on Broadway Avenue, with local poet Liz Phillips. A retrospective of Marilyn Cooper's art, *A Friend of Dorothy's*, ran all through June at the U of S Main Library. A reception called "A Pink Tea Party" was held June 21st with artist

Cooper (*aka* Duncan Campbell) in attendance.

GALA awards were again handed out by GLHS to honor those in our community for their hard work and dedication. Awards for long-time community service were given to Peter Millard and Lori Crozier. The Man of the Year award went to Burton Urquhart and Woman of the Year was Megan Morman. The evening was topped off with local entertainment and hosted by Kathleen Hewitt (Schmoo) from Regina who brought her sense of community from the Queen City.

Queer people and their allies from across the province gathered on June 23rd to participate in the 2nd Annual Saskatchewan Pride Parade. Downtown Saskatoon overflowed with rainbow balloons, banners, and outrageous costumes as the parade made its way from Kinsmen Park to the Vimy Memorial Bandshell on the riverbank. A short rally afterwards featured several speakers and the presentation of the 2001 Gay and Lesbian Pride Day Proclamation by the Honourable Pat Lorje, MLA.

Rainbow umbrella in hand, Lorje acted as Grand Marshal. She was followed by the towering balloon arches of the Regina Pride Committee, and rainbow paraphernalia of every shape and size escorted by a fantastic diversity of people of all ages and persuasions. Convertibles carrying drag kings and queens drove alongside church groups; unions walked beside theatre groups and queer students from the University of Saskatchewan. Participants marched proudly through the streets for over an hour until making their way to the Bandshell, where they were greeted by music such as the Village People's "Go West," and "ABC" by the Jackson Five.

The rally featured speakers from both Saskatoon's and Regina's Pride Committees, GLHS, GLCR, the USSU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Centre, and P-FLAG, among others. Its highlight was the presentation of the government's proclamation of Gay and Lesbian Pride Day for both 2001 and retroactively for 2000. Provincial Secretary Pat Lorje was pleased to present the plaque jointly to the Pride Committees of Regina and Sask-

atoon. Also on hand were MLAs Pat Atkinson and Peter Prebble.

Estimates put turnout somewhere between 320 and 350 people, about the same as 2000's parade in Regina. However, this year's event showed a dramatic increase in the number of floats and other props, making it appear quite large and stretching it for over four city blocks.

Parade organizer Megan Morman said she was very pleased with the turnout. "There were over 30 organizations registered this year," she said. "Most were gay groups, but a considerable chunk of them were straight allies out to show their support and solidarity. And that's really what the parade is about: building and celebrating our diverse community."

Pride Week in Saskatoon wrapped up that night with a dance that was an overwhelming success.

METAMORPHOSIS EMERGED

(Saskatoon) After a 14-year absence, Metamorphosis successfully emerged from its cocoon. "The Prairie Celebration for Gays & Lesbians and their Allies" returned to Saskatoon October 5-8, receiving rave reviews from attendants. The driving force, committee member Marion Alexander "...found it very rewarding to see people return to share this event again. It was a total success all the way around and we're looking forward to seeing more people next year."

Metamorphosis, originally created as an "alternative family" Thanksgiving Celebration for lesbians and gay men, ran from 1978 through 1987, drawing visitors from across the country. Manitoba, Alberta and B.C. residents joined Saskatchewan in the renewal of this event.

Billed as "A fun-filled Thanksgiving Weekend Celebration of Events & Networking," activities included a Friday night coffee house, Saturday workshops ranging from Myths of Sex, Gender and Identity to Belly-Dancing, plus an artisan craft fair, all held at the Unitarian Centre. The Saturday night dance at the Cosmopolitan Seniors Centre was followed by a Sunday Feast with all the trimmings, and a concert by Heather Bishop & the Bridge City Chorus, both held at St. Thomas Wesley United Church. Monday brunch at the Unitarian Centre ended the festivities ... and began the planning for next year's events.

20 SASKATOON PRIDE 02

SATURDAY * JUNE 22

Caravan to Regina
for the 3rd Annual
Sask. Pride Parade
Meet 8:00am, Parking Lot of
Victoria School

SUNDAY * JUNE 23

Pride Week Service
10:30am, Unitarian Centre
Family Day in the Park
3:00pm, Kinsmen Park

MONDAY * JUNE 24

Flag Raising
City Hall
Art Opening and
Silent Auction
7:00pm, AKA Gallery

TUESDAY * JUNE 25

Millard Library Reception
7:00pm, GLHS
Lipstick & Balls Pool Tourney
7:30pm, Break Zone Billiards
Not Another Teen Angst
Comedy Drag Show
10:30pm, Diva's

WEDNESDAY * JUNE 26

This Very Minute!
Concert featuring local
queer performers
8:00pm, Refinery

THURSDAY * JUNE 27

Haunting Church Discussion
7:30pm, GLHS
Hedwig & the Angry Inch
Mulholland Drive
7 & 9:15pm, Broadway Theatre
Let Me Dance For You
High Energy Drag Show
10:30pm, Diva's

FRIDAY * JUNE 28

Family Potluck Supper
6:00pm, St. Thomas Wesley
GALA Award Ceremony
Fundraiser & Silent Auction
6:30pm, Legion Hall

SATURDAY * JUNE 29

Pride Dance
8:00pm, Garry Ballroom, U of S

SUNDAY * JUNE 30

Pride Wind-Up Brunch
11:00am, Collector's Diner
Step Right Up Side Show
Drag Show
10:30pm, Diva's

Saskatoon Diversity Network

See a Pride Guide,
visit <http://www.gaycanada.com/saskatoon-pride>,
or email prideweek@hotmail.com
for more information.

PRAIRIE PRIDE 2002

WINNIPEG

The first prairie community out of the blocks to celebrate Pride Week is Winnipeg where Pride of the Prairies kicked off Friday, May 31 with a flag raising at City Hall. Over 100 people, and a handful of anti-gay demonstrators, were on hand to watch the first-ever raising of the Rainbow Flag in front of City Hall. Police were also on hand for the event after threats were issued about the event which has caused some controversy in the Manitoba capital.

Later that evening a softball tournament took place with prizes presented to the winning team and a Dyke Night Out Social took place at the Connection. A Pride Art Show, featuring local artists, opened Saturday June 1, 2002.

On Thursday, June 6 a public forum "Same Sex Immigration — Challenges and Struggles at the Border" will take place at the University of Winnipeg, Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall (3rd Floor, Centennial Hall). Panelists will include Rick Wood, who is a partner to an immigration applicant, Larry de Blaere from Citizenship & Immigration Canada, Alan Wise from the International Centre of Winnipeg, and Gilles Marchildon from Egale. The free event will be moderated by Kristine Barr, a Winnipeg #1 School Trustee.

Other events planned include a Pride

Roller-Rama, a non-smoking/no alcohol coffee house, a Loft Party fundraiser for the Rainbow Community Resource Centre and the 2nd Annual Pride Walk/Run with funds going to the Village Clinic and the Emergency Assistance Fund.

The week is capped off Sunday, June 9 with a rally, parade and festival beginning at noon with the rally taking place at the Legislative Grounds, Broadway Ave and Memorial Blvd. At 12:30 the Pride Parade will wend its way through downtown Winnipeg, returning to Memorial Park for a Pride Festival and Fair. Prizes will be presented for best floats and costumes. The headliner for the Festival is Carole Pope, with performances by Al Rae (a comic and CBC Radio personality), D.Rangers, RWB School's Jazz Dance Troupe, Daisy Blue Groff (of Painting Daisies), Lindsay Jane, Will "The Queer Karaoke King" Gray, and outside the lines. The festival also features a Festival Fair with commercial vendors, a food pavilion and events for all ages.

Later that evening a Pride Cabaret, "Adults in Wonderland," takes place at The Pyramid Cabaret, 176 Fort Street and a Pride Social, "Turn Up The Heat Inferno," takes place at Le Rendezvous, 768 Tache Avenue.

Check out www.gaycanada.com/winnipeg-pride for more details of the week's events.

REGINA

Another fun-filled week of activities are planned for Regina's Pride Week which kicks off this year on Saturday, June 15 with Opening Ceremonies taking place at the Frederick W. Hill Mall (former Scarth Street Mall). There will also be a reception at 8pm for HOMOSAIC 5: Reception for the Pride Week Art Show featuring photography, sculpture, painting and drawings by local queer artists. The first day of Pride Week will end later that evening with a Lavendar Social Club dance.

City Hall will once again be the site for the raising of the Rainbow Pride flag on Monday, June 17 where it will fly for the remainder of Pride Week. It provides a reminder that lesbian, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people are a vital part of the Regina community.

Other events planned for the week include an educational workshop and information session, designed to educate Regina citizens about the challenges queer people face. Organizers hope that the workshop will be the beginning of more opportunities to educate the general public. Another educational opportunity will come when Pink Triangle Community Services holds a workshop on The Law and Same-Sex Couples.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Scarth Street Club, which has grown into the Gay/Lesbian Community of Regina, the operators of the current club. Gay & Grey is a social event where young and old can meet. Founding members of the first club will be on hand to reminisce and tell their stories of being queer in the early '70s and beginning the process of building a community.

A Gay in the Park will provide a venue for all ages and sexual orientation to share an afternoon of fun in Wascana park with a barbecue, volleyball and other activities.
(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

ties. A coming out party will allow people to share their coming out stories and celebrate their lives as open gay men, lesbians, bisexuals or transgendered people.

A variety of performances are also scheduled including *Women of Influence*, a one-woman play performed by Brita Lind. The Oscar Wilde Theatre will also stage performances of *Nine Eleven* for three evenings during the week.

The week will end with the 3rd Annual Provincial Pride Parade through downtown Regina to the provincial legislature where a rally will occur. The provincial parade alternates between Saskatoon and Regina each year, with people from across the province—and even a few from outside the province—marching to show their pride.

Early that evening the Pride committee will present their annual awards recognizing individuals who have made significant contributions towards building a queer community in Regina. The week will be capped off with a giant dance.

You can find the Pride Guide at queer-friendly places around Regina which will provide information on times and locations of the many events. Information can also be obtained on line at www.gaycanada.com/pride-regina.

SASKATOON

Pride events for Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community begin with a trek to Regina June 22 to participate in the 3rd Annual Provincial Pride Parade. Those wishing to join the caravan to Regina, or needing a ride or having room in their car, can meet in the parking lot of Victoria School at the corner of Broadway and 11th Street.

Saskatoon events kick off on Sunday, June 23 with a Pride Week Service at the Unitarian Centre followed by Family Day in the Park in Kinsmen Park. The official Flag Raising will take place at City Hall on Monday, June 24, and the Art Opening and Silent Auction will take place that evening at the AKA Gallery.

Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) is hosting a reception on Tuesday, June 25 to rename their community library The Peter Millard Memorial Library in honour of one of Saskatoon's gay pioneers who passed away last December. The Lipstick & Balls Pool Tourney takes place that evening at Break Zone Billiards with a comedy drag show taking place at Diva's.

On Wednesday, June 26 a concert, This Very Minute, featuring local queer performers will take place at the Refinery. On Thursday, June 27 a "Haunting Church Discussion" will take place at GLHS and the newly renovated Broadway Theatre will be screening *Hedwig & The Angry Inch* and *Mulholland Drive*.

Friday, June 28 provides two different opportunities for people to enjoy a meal together. A Family Potluck Supper takes place at St. Thomas Wesley United Church and GLHS will be holding their annual GALA Award Ceremony Fundraiser & Silent Auction at the downtown Legion Hall. The evening features a gourmet supper with an evening of entertainment provided by local performer Fran Forsberg and Calgary singer Lindsay James. A silent auction with a wide variety of items up for bid will also take place as well as presentation of awards to individuals who've made significant contributions to Saskatoon's queer community. This year GLHS will be giving an award to MLA Pat Atkinson for her work over the years for gay and lesbian rights.

On Saturday, June 29 a giant Pride Dance will take place at the Garry Ballroom at the University of Saskatchewan. The week winds up Sunday, June 30 with a Pride Wind-Up Brunch at the Collector's Diner

and a drag show taking place at Diva's that evening.

In a break with tradition, this year's events are being coordinated by a new community, the Saskatoon Diversity Network. Previously GLHS had taken on the responsibility of coordinating Pride Week activities in Saskatoon.

CALGARY

Feel The Freedom is the theme for Pride Week in Calgary this year. The week kicks off June 9 with the annual Pride Day Parade. The parade starts at 11am from the staging area at 2nd Street SW on the north side of 17th Avenue and travels down 17th Avenue, turning onto 11th Street and ending at Connaught School.

Pride Calgary's Street Fair will follow the parade at the school grounds. Organizers are billing it as "The Greatest Gay Outdoor Show in Calgary." A Business Fair will satisfy the urges of the shoppers and music and entertainment and a beer garden will provide opportunities for friends, old and new, to socialize.

Calgary's many gay establishments and organizations have a wide range of activities planned for Pride week including a church service and various sporting events.

Pride week, but not Pride in Calgary, ends with the Pride dance "Perspectives – not just another TV show" on Saturday June 15 at the Max Bell Centre, 1001 Barlow Trail SE. A number of DJs will play dance tunes from the '70s, '80s, '90s as well as today's hottest music. A number

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

of performers will also keep those in attendance entertained. Tickets are \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door and are available at Boyztown, The Verge, Money Pennies, The Calgary Eagle and the Rainbow Pride Resource Centre.

Additional information can be obtained online at www.pridecalgary.com.

EDMONTON

Pride Week in Edmonton begins Saturday June 15 and ends on Saturday June 22 with a jam packed week between. The week kicks off June 15 with "Pride Family Picnic for Children and Their Gay or Lesbian Relatives" at the Westmount Fitness Centre, 12840 - 109 Ave beginning at 12:30pm. That evening the 2002 Mr. Edmonton Leather Contest, hosted by Northern Chaps, occurs at the Arts Barns, 10330 - 84 Avenue. The "Decades of Pride Dance," celebrating the 20th anniversary of Womonspace and the 30th anniversary of Edmonton's Gay and Lesbian Community Centre, takes place at

the Alberta Avenue Community Centre, 9210 - 118 Avenue. Tickets are \$12.00 and are available at Orlando Books, Pride Video, Secrets and Woody's, as well as from members of both hosting groups.

On Sunday, June 16 the Lambda Christian Community Church will hold their "Praises and Rainbows Service" at Garneau United Church, 11148 - 84 Avenue.

Councillor Michael Phair is sponsoring a public forum, "Police, Gays and Lesbians Creating One Community" in the Heritage room of City Hall on June 17 beginning at 7:00pm. During the remainder of the week various gay establishments in Edmonton will be hosting a variety of events and activities.

On Friday June 21, Orlando Books, 10123 Whyte Avenue, is hosting "Celebrate Pride Solstice" with stand-up comic Erin Graham. Boots is also hosting "Mr. And Mz. Gay Pageant - Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose" that evening.

The big Pride Parade takes place on Sat-

urday, June 22 beginning at noon. The "Many Faces - One Community Pride Parade" starts at 111 Street and Jasper Avenue, continues on Jasper Avenue and turns North on 119 Street to the Oliver Arena (10335 - 119 Street). Following the parade, entertainment and a community fair will take place at the arena.

Later that evening the Edmonton Pride Awards ceremony occurs at the Arts Barn, 10330 - 84 Avenue. At 9:00pm the Jean Lawson Society is hosting the "Many Faces - One Community Pride Dance" also at the Arts Barn. Tickets are \$10.00 in advance and \$12.00 at the door and are available at Orlando Books, Pride Video, Buddys, The Roost, Secrets and Conrad's Sugar Bowl.

Additional information on the many events can be found at www.times10.org/pride2002.htm.

*Celebrate
PRIDE 2002!*

DIVERSITY OF COMMUNITY

First Impressions [Saskatoon]	P9 (July /Aug. 1984): 3
Around Town [Saskatoon]	P9 (July/Aug. 1984): 5-6
The MCC in Saskatoon	P18 [1985]: 23
Still Psyched Out	P30 [misnumbered 29][1987]: 26-28
Gay and Lesbian Support Services	P32 (April 29/87): 24
The Divine Comedy	P42 (June 29/88): 16, 21
Commentary – A Personal Viewpoint [on building community]	P42 (June 29/88): 26-27
Speaking Out [Saskatoon radio program]	P43 (Aug. 10/88): 21
Royalty Arrives	P47 (March 1/89): 5
In Your Area [sample community pages list following expansion of coverage to Alberta and Manitoba (compare listings in P157, below)]	P49 (May 31/89): 11, 14
Prairies Choruses	P84 (Oct. 27/93): 11
Prairie Leather	P85 (Dec. 8/93): 13
The Choir That Won't Shut Up	P86 (Jan. 26/94)[Jan. 24/94 on cover]: 24-25
Home, Homo on the Range: Hills of Lavendar [Spring Valley Guest Ranch]	P90 (July 27/94): 9
Out on the Prairies	P91 (Sept. 14/94): 10-11
Circle of Two-Spirits	P91 (Sept. 14/94): 19
Lambda North [Prince Albert organization]	P93 (Dec. 7/94): 13
What's In It For Me?	P96 (April 26/95): 7
Invisible Families	P99 (Sept. 13/95): 11
Pride, Community & Belonging	P106 (July 24/96): 9
People Are Dying...Do Something!	P107 (Sept. 11/96): 5
Gender, Roles and Rules	P108 (Oct. 23/96): 6-7
Bridging the Gap	P110 (Jan. 29/97): 8
Nalbach Dies	P114 (July 30/97): 12
Part-time Queers	P116 (Oct. 22/97): 5
Not Allowed To Be Proud [bisexuals]	P117 (Dec. 3/97): 7

(continued on next page)

Editorial [advances in and remaining problems for gay/lesbian human rights]	P118 (Jan. 21/98): 3
Expressions Art Show [Calgary]	P119 (March 18/98): 14
Queers of Colour [Winnipeg]	P120 (April 29/98): 14
Letter [concerning Café Browse, Saskatoon]	P123 (Sept. 16/98): 4
In & Out	P123 (Sept. 16/98): 7
Queen of All He Surveys!?	P126 (Jan. 27/99): 6, 9
Who Is the Community?	P129 (June 2/99): 10-11
Rodeo a Success [Canadian Rockies International Rodeo, Calgary]	P130 (July 28/99): 14
Singing in Manitoba...And in Saskatoon [new Winnipeg choral group, and Saskatoon's Bridge City Chorus]	P131 (Sept. 15/99): 19
Editorial [ensuring that charitable donations go to the gay/lesbian community]	P132 (Oct. 27/99): 3
Super Sports Weekend [Edmonton]	P132 (Oct. 27/99): 13
Editorial [sale of Saskatoon's Ukrainian National Federation Hall, long rented as site for queer events; new venue]	P133 (Dec. 8/99): 3
Christmas Eve Service [MCC, Calgary]	P133 (Dec. 8/99): 20
Queer City Cinema [Regina]	P137 (May 31/00): 11-12 and P142 (Jan. 31/01): 9
Beginnings [new Winnipeg choir, Rainbow Harmony Project]	P137 (May 31/00): 24
Leather Back [Edmonton]	P138 (Aug. 2/00): 13
Editorial [thoughts on occasion of publication of 150 th issue of <u>Perceptions</u>]	P150 (Jan. 30/02): 3
Busting Out All Over	P150 (Jan. 30/02): 4, 9
Loss of a Pioneer [Peter Millard]	P150 (Jan. 30/02): 8
Western Cup [sports event, Calgary]	P151 (March 13/02): 14
Building Relationships [queers and police in Saskatoon]	P153 (June 5/02): 13
In Your Area [community listings in <u>Perceptions</u> at the end of 2002; (compare listings in P49, above)]	P157 (Dec. 4/02): 15-18

First Impressions

Bruce Chenail.

I recently moved to Saskatoon after living for 2 years in Milwaukee, W.I., a city which has a very active Gay community. I was pleasantly surprised with the beauty of Saskatoon, with its many facilities and activities, and with the friendliness of its residents. However I see a relatively under-developed community here, with restricted opportunities for gay people.

I was relieved to find an exclusively gay bar in town, but dismayed that only one exists, (Milwaukee has 27; many with specialization). While Numbers serves a purpose it hardly fulfills the diverse community needs. "Talking bars" or lounges, bar-restaurants and Womens bars are popular with many people.

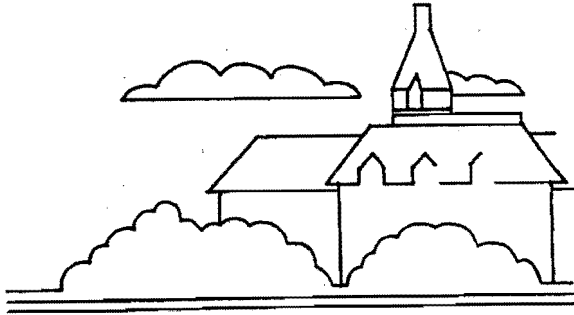
Information is available about gay activities-limited as they are-through the Gayline. The people there are pleasant and informative. However the Gayline is open only 12 hours per week due to a lack of volunteer help.

I was pleased to see that the publication, Perceptions exists. It would be nice to receive more frequent issues though. And I understand that support by advertisers and volunteers is inadequate.

Groups such as Lambda, GLSS, G/LCCS, Affirm and Live and Let Live have been formed but support for these groups seems to be lacking. I was surprised that groups such as Parents and Friends of Gays, Gay Fathers, and discussion groups or 'rap sessions' do not exist here.

I was horrified to learn that in Saskatchewan, the Human Rights Code does not protect gay persons. For example, the Human Rights Commission tells me that I would have no recourse if I lost a job or was evicted from an apartment because of my sexual orientation. No wonder gay people seem so closeted in this Province. I suspect that it is fear of recrimination that causes the closeting to endure; but also I think this fear and failure to demand human/civil rights perpetuates the status quo. There is a definite need for an active, ballsy political insistance for our rights if change is ever to occur. Change has happened in other centers; but it was very actively pursued. It will not "just happen". Gay people here may be simply afraid. I sure hope it's not apathy. Saskatoon will be a much, much more free and happy place for persons living an "alternate life-style" when legal protection and more diverse facilities exist. In these respects people here have a tremendous opportunity for improvement. In general though, Saskatoon is a nice place and I'm happy to be living here.

AROUND TOWN



Bill Kobewka

It's a muggy Thursday evening in June. Somebody is having an argument in the alley below. Voices, loud, sharp, and angry echo up the concrete canyon. Brian is bored. Brian is patient. Brian is also reading a trashy book, but then some things are forgiven for volunteer work. The phone rings and Brian quickly takes his feet down, turns off the radio and answers it. Just somebody from another town wanting to know where the gay club is. Such calls are frequent. So are those from anxious teenagers astounded to discover the number in the book and paralyzed into long silences as they listen to another gay person. Thursday nights are good nights to work. From seven to nine not much happens, a few prank calls, one or two for information, maybe a serious one if your lucky. About nine, as late night shopping winds down, people start to drift in. This evening six gay men show up one by one. The talk is light and informal. Introductions are made. A dentist, new in town, has brought down some newsletters from Milwaukee.

Perhaps some of the illustrations could be used in Perceptions. A fairly erotic image done by an old boyfriend is considered maybe too risqué for Saskatoon. It's discovered that Milwaukee will be having its sixth annual softball tournament this summer. There's talk of the Gay Games in Vancouver. Later somebody suggests we play cards and a convivial game of Hearts gets underway. Newcomers like me are taught the rules in a polite manner, when we fail to show proper deference (ie: when we don't lose) we are just



as politely ganged up on. The game proceeds, and the coffee and the conversation are warm, as is the friendship. And as one man put it, while discussing cruising in the park, it's a lot less smoky. Around eleven Brian turns the phone line over to a pre-recorded message. After a couple of games of a considerably quicker, and lively game called 'asshole' those perseverant few who remained behind drift off into the night, to the bar, to the park or to home. Brian

stays just long enough to turn off the coffee machine and lock up. He works every second Thursday, and another friend the alternates. So if you want something to do which doesn't require your best clothes and finest dance steps next Thursday, why not try the Drop-In at the GLSS office. Incidentally, I won the game of Hearts, but then as one of my serpent-tongued confidants crowed, "Lucky in cards. Unlucky in love."

THE MCC

IN SASKATOON

Saskatoon has the newest fledgling congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church - the MCC - in Canada. Pastor Judy, with the encouragement of other MCC groups throughout North America is currently setting up the local group.

MCC is a blending of Catholic and Protestant doctrines. It is a Christian church which is publicly and openly supportive of gays and lesbians. It provides a place for worship and study, for social interaction and fosters a sense of community among people. MCC is a worldwide organization started 17 years ago in the U.S. Its main outreach has been to the homosexual community. Distinctive also are its commitment to a ministry to the deaf - every service is signed - and its use of inclusive (nonsexist) language in referring to people and to God. Besides weekly services and study sessions MCC offers rites of Holy Union and funerals.

The Church blesses relationships and offers other forms of recognition to couples. Pastor Judy says "God created us to be in relationship with God and with each other. Gays and lesbians have a particular gift to offer but face additional challenges. MCC is a place to get some grounding and to learn about relationships."

Pastor Judy trained in a mainline Protestant seminary. As she studied she struggled to reconcile her sexuality with her career, family and spirituality. Questions such as "Can I be a Christian as well as a homosexual?" and "What does the Bible say about homosexuality?" came to mind. She was not getting from traditional churches the kind of support she sought. Now she believes that homosexuals are "whole, healthy people with the same need for spiritual support and growth as other people."

Pastor Judy intends the Saskatoon MCC to be a place where people can be empowered to be the people they were created to be - both in themselves and in their relationships. She hopes to put together "a worship service that is meaningful." She and her partner Heather believe that MCC can be a warm accepting group that will extend a warm welcome to anyone from the curious to the committed.

Weekly services will be held on Sunday evenings at 7.30 at the Unitarian Hall at 502 Main Street beginning September 8. Because of MCC's blending of Catholic and Protestant components most people will find something familiar in the MCC service. At all services there is communion which may be taken singly, as couples or in groups. Pastor Judy may be reached at home most evenings. Call 343-6488 for more information.

Bruce C.

Still Psyched Out

Frequently, I am invited to speak to various groups about gay people and homosexuality. Usually I am only too happy to accept the invitation. It is an opportunity to work at correcting the many myths and lies that are still told about us. Most of the groups I speak to are social workers, students in varied courses of study and occasionally church groups. In most groups there are a few people who begin to challenge what they have been told about us and begin to see that maybe gay men and lesbians are not all that different from them. I also learn something about how attitudes do change over time. I have been talking to groups about homosexuality for fifteen years now and it is rewarding to see the changes that do take place.

Last November I was invited to speak at a noon hour forum at City Hospital. They regularly have these forums to discuss various mental health issues. This particular noon the topic was homosexuality. It had been a while since I had last talked to a group of predominately medical professionals. This group included psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses and other assorted people in the health field from the hospitals and the general community. Homosexuality and mental health was the focus.

Mental health, mine and others, has been an interest of mine for some time, and I have been working in the field for a number of years. The psychiatric profession has not traditionally been a friend to gay people with their insistence on labelling any behaviour deviant that did not fit into the rigid definitions of what was OK behaviour. I was curious to see if much had changed in the few years it had been since I last talked to such a group. These people wield a lot of control over our lives.

As I arrived at the hospital I was wondering what I was going to say. I had no idea what to expect or what they expected of me. The details I had received about the forum had been sketchy. I took along two cohorts for support and I knew that some gay supportive people had promised to be in the audience. All I really knew was that they were going to discuss the case of a patient who was gay but wanted to be straight (whatever that is).

The first speaker, a psychiatric nurse, presented the case and some details about the problems this patient was having with his sexuality. She was followed by a psychiatrist who explained the standard medical definitions of the case. The psychiatric profession uses a large diagnostic manual (DSM-111) that classifies people as to the mental illness they have. Just about any situation you can think of regarding human behaviour can be found in this manual with definitions for all kinds of mental illnesses. The first time I flipped through the manual I discovered that I had the symptoms of a number of mental illnesses. I never did go further than flipping through the pages. I was afraid that I would discover that I was totally deranged with a multitude of mental illnesses. Prior to the mid '70's this manual classified all gay men and lesbians as being mentally ill. Mental illness is one of the more stigmatizing labels that our society uses to deal with people who do not live up to proscribed behaviour. Many psychiatrists have grown rich from treating people for homosexuality. Shock treatment, electrical and chemical, were often and occasionally still are, favorite forms of treatment. In the mid '70's the American Psychiatric Association (APA) decided that homosexuality, in and of itself, was no longer a mental illness. Now talk

about your miracle cures. One day I, and many other people, are mentally ill and the next day I wake up and I am cured. The APA wasn't through with the issue, though. They decided to create a new category of mental illness for those people who couldn't be comfortable with their gay sexuality and wanted to change. I never have been able to find a label for heterosexual people who aren't comfortable with their sexuality and wanted to change!

After the psychiatrist we were treated to a speaker from a christian counselling organization who was to suggest the solution for the patient's problem from a biblical perspective. I was all ears. Over the years I've heard all the classic religious dogma on homosexuality. I was not to be disappointed. I received quite a refresher course as he presented a thorough list of how his god condemns homosexuality. I heard the classic lines about stoning gay people and methods of killing gay people as well as how we are a blight in their god's eyes. Pretty heavy stuff that dogma. The speaker did try to reassure us that he personally equated homosexuality as a sin on the par with being unfaithful to your wife. That was an improvement there. I am used to being equated with murders, drunkards, thieves, etc., etc..

Finally my time arrived. I was glad that I had agreed to be the last speaker as adrenalin coursed through me from listening to the previous speaker. I gave them my classic speech about homosexuality not being a black or white issue. Only 4% and 6% of the population can be classified (if one must classify) as exclusively homosexual and heterosexual respectively. The other 90% of the population falls somewhere in between. I explained my theory that homophobia, the irrational fear of gay men and lesbians, was the number one mental health problem in our society today. I tried to point out how it exacts an enormous toll

in human lives, happiness, medical costs and wasted lives. I believe I suggested that homophobia should be listed as a mental illness in their diagnostic manual rather than homosexuality. I suggested that they could give the patient they were discussing in the forum some accurate information about gay people. Perhaps if he knew that it is indeed possible to be gay and happy, millions of us do it each day, he would be less afraid to be himself. Maybe some information about how many of us there really are. One in ten people in this world are exclusively or predominately gay. I think that makes about 450,000,000 of us, give or take a few. Maybe he might come to see that being gay needn't be that scary after all. It certainly is better than spending the rest of his life hating himself and wishing he were something he could never be.

After my few minutes of speaking the session was thrown open to the floor for questions. This is always my favorite part of these adventures as I can get a good sense of where people's attitudes are coming from. There is always someone who asks a question that confirms my statements about homophobia.

Two questioners stand out in my mind from that day. One person questioned the christian counsellor about how he would counsel two women or two men who came to him wanting counselling for their relationship. Would he counsel them to change their sexuality? Yes, he felt that he would have to work with them to change their sexuality. The questioner bore down and asked if he could provide relationship counselling to a gay couple who were perfectly comfortable with their sexuality but wanted to work on improving their relationship. He had to admit that he would not be able to help them.

The other questions was directed towards me from a gentleman in the front row. He

(continued on page 28)

(continued from page 27)

was concerned that if all societal sanctions against homosexuality were removed wouldn't everyone become gay leaving no one to procreate the human race. My theory about irrational fears was proven again. Why would everyone in the world become gay if there were no sanctions? Does that mean that being gay is OK then if everyone was bound to become gay with all sanctions removed? I tried to reassure him that many gay people do procreate and have been for years. If it ever became a problem I, and I am sure others, would make the sacrifice and procreate. The scary thing about that question, I discovered after the forum, was that the person who asked the questions was the new Head of Psychiatry at the hospital.

Have things changed in people's attitudes over the past fifteen years? Yes, fortunately attitudes have changed. After the session I had a number of people come up to me and express their support and appreciation for hearing my views. When I returned to my office I was delighted to receive a call from a nurse who works with her doctor-husband as counsellors. She also wanted to express her appreciation for my talk. Fifteen years ago I also used to get phone calls after speaking to groups. Those were always people wanting to let me know that I was on the way to hell or they wanted to pray for me. Things have indeed changed. Too bad that change has to come so slowly!

Gens Hellquist.

Gay and Lesbian Support Services

Ever hear the complaint: "Nobody talks to each other in this town"? Well don't believe it. At Gay & Lesbian Support Services (GLSS) they've been talking and listening to people for years. GLSS was established in 1980 to provide support services to lesbians and gay men in Saskatoon. Their main function over the years has been to operate GAYLINE, but they have also been active in other areas over the years. They also operate the community library which is open for people to check out books.

GAYLINE is open weeknights and provides information on community events, groups and happenings. It is also a valuable resource for people coming out who need someone to talk with about their gay feelings. GAYLINE is available for people who are already out but need someone to talk with about things happening in their lives.

Over the years GLSS has experienced problems with resources, both financial and human. The lack of volunteers and money often means that they can't offer as many services as they have in the past or as many as they would like.

GLSS is sponsoring a dance at the Parktown on May 30 to help raise money to keep their valuable service going. They are appealing to the community to help by making donations of money and time. Money donated will help pay the rent for their small offices in the Community Aid building at 136 Avenue F South. It will also help pay for bills such as the phones and will allow them to begin advertising their services in the Star Phoenix once again.

People in the community can help by volunteering their time to work on the phones (training is provided) or by helping in other ways. All donations can be sent to GLSS, 136 Avenue F South, Saskatoon, Sask. Anyone with time on their hands to help keep this valuable resource operating and healthy can call GAYLINE at 665-9129 and talk to one of the current volunteers. Give a few bucks or give some time. Isn't it worth it if it keeps people talking?



"What's a satirist to do when reality is the way it is," asked writer Don Kerr at the Saturday night performance of The Devine Comedy. "The satirists are running the province!"

That being true, there was still plenty of room left for the political satire of the group known as Artists for Human Rights. This collective (with a core membership affectionately named the Saskatoon Seven) formed shortly after Premier Grant Devine's comparisons of gays to bankrobbers. The aim of the show was to both laugh ourselves back to sanity and to make it known that government anti-gay attitudes will not go unchallenged.

The evening consisted of songs, skits and readings with several opportunities for audience participation whether it was singing, snapping, impromptu hissing, or playing "pass the buck" with a chance to field your political query to a three-headed politician (you had to be there for that one!).

The Divine Comedy

The emcee was warm and witty writer David Carpenter, who also conducted a sing-along of his "I want to be a Tory ... it's Sodom and Gomory if it isn't Tory blue ...". One of the gay-relevant readings was Don Campbell's "Private Publicity" in which a government P.R. manager remarks, "If (homosexuals) get rights, everybody will want them." Peter Millard also gave a reading; his work, "A Miracle on Colony Street", was a perhaps only slightly fictionalized account of his visitation by a sex-obsessed evangelical. My favorite piece of the evening was a reading by Bob Bag (aka Saskatoon writer Ron Clark) as the bible-and-baseball-bat-toting leader of the Faith, Family, Fitness and Homosexual De-programming Centre. Other talented performers included singer Donna Caruso of Fort Qu'appelle singing such memorable numbers as "We ain't no public toilets so P.C.'s don't you shit on us."

Along with gay rights, other issues poked at were government health care (or lack thereof), public service and social services. There was also a visual art display. I had a particular fondness for a work by Jan Haave

(continued on page 21)

(continued from page 16)

titled "How Many Angels Can Dance on a Pin Head", featuring the mug of Grant Schmidt. The admission buttons were a nice touch to the event. Mine said, "I'd hate to be a Francophone Lesbian Needing an Abortion in this Province!" I hear there was one saying "Pig Fuckers for Devine" that got snatched up early. The Saturday night performance was played to a full house and on Friday night people had to be turned away at the door.

While I praise anyone with the time and energy to pull off such an event as The Devine Comedy, I do have a few criticisms. The show ran a little long, with two twenty-minute intermissions making the show well over the two hour mark. Part of the lengthiness might have been relieved with more vari-

ety in the format; many of the acts were one person acts, several of them podium readings. (I'll admit the heat that night added to the show's length.) As well I was hoping to hear more gay, and specifically lesbian, material.

I really don't want to be too heavy-handed. It's not every day that gays and non-gays can get together and share some laughs about our common plight. Peter Millard put it well when he said that it was "gratifying to see 'normal' people speaking out." A big thank-you goes out to Artists for Human Rights for creating such an opportunity.

L.G.

COMMENTARY —

a personal viewpoint

One of the concerns facing the Saskatoon Gay Community is that of "building community." The concept of building community is the idea that the widely dispersed members in the community can, in some way, meld into a cohesive unit or support network. This idea is not drastically different from the successful idea evidenced in many areas of the straight and women's communities in the guise of such institutions as rape crisis centres, survivors of incest groups and the like; however, in this instance, the need for this type of networking stems from the desire to advance the interests of those involved rather than primarily to recover from the negative consequences of the actions of others. This is not to say that helping individual members of the community to overcome or survive their negative experiences is not in the interests of the community, but only that the interests of the community as a whole are best served if, and only if, all the institutional players can, and do, cooperate.

The institutional setting of the Saskatoon Gay Community is diverse; encompassing PERCEPTIONS, Metamorphosis, Numbers, AIDS Saskatoon and a host of other organizations, the gay community can be seen as covering the specialized needs of some groups in the community. Other groups go uncovered; these groups, to be sure, have no feeling of community.

The institutions themselves, or rather, the individuals comprising the institutions, have oftentimes a dubious feeling of community. Were these individuals to be asked why they

do not feel that they have the support of the community, a common reply would be that these people feel that they do all of the work for their respective organizations while the rest of the community enjoys the fruits of their labour. In virtually every instance where this is the complaint, it is justified.

Zorro's and the Women's Music Collective are but two of the casualties of this lack of support. Other institutions which may fall victim to this lack of support (or community) are SPAA and PERCEPTIONS. Both are desperate for help! Try to imagine how much worse off would be the members of the community were these two organizations to wink out of existence. No organized, predominantly gay outlets for sporting activity and no gay newspaper. Those are the main activities of each of the organizations but consider what else they do: they provide social outlets for the whole community in the form of dances; they often lend their services to other organizations for various activities; they provide valuable contacts for those involved that they may not otherwise been able to make. The point is that it is in the community's best interest that all its institutions of this kind proliferate . . . we all gain by it.

How is community built? Cooperation and mutual respect. Simple as that. We do as much as we can for each other, but this has got to be a mutual agreement; further, it has got to be recognized that while each group represents some faction of the community, it is in the best interests of all factions, regardless of personal feelings and disputes, that all groups are encouraged and supported.

Another way in which community is built is through discouraging group hostilities. In this instance, male-female antagonism is meant specifically. Men: recognize that you may not want to sleep with women or that they are not like your mother or whatever is the reason that causes you to not involve yourself with women, but at the same time, recognize that not every woman is the same. Consider this--women come in two varieties, those you like (for whatever reason) and those you dislike (for whatever reason). It is possible for men and women to get along just fine as friends. Women: recognize that men can be real jerks but likewise recognize that not every man is the same. Try this: men come in two varieties, those you like and those you dislike. Remember, it is possible for women and men to be good friends!

Another way to think about male-female relations is to look at the straight community. The one characteristic that has driven gay men and lesbians into the gay community is sexual persecution. This is common ground. Sexual persecution is definitely a form of discrimination. We, as a community, denounce and renounce straight society (or at least many aspects of it) because of this sexual discrimination. We even seek protection from it under the law. How, then, can what is just as surely sexual discrimination (ie. men not liking a woman because she is a woman and vice versa) be called rational behaviour? It simply cannot. Every member of this community considers him-/herself to be rational and, doubtless, most are. If contradictions cannot exist, then either we are all wrong in our belief that persecution on the basis of sexual orientation is wrong or the feeling held by members of this community (that it is somehow okay to discriminate against either men or women on the basis of his or her sex) is wrong.

Putting all of this together, the solution to the problem of building community is neither easy nor so hard as to be prohibitive. Once the sexual contradiction has been eliminated, the rest is easier. The next hardest step will be the nurturing of a climate of mutual respect, but with the contradiction gone it will be easier. The rest will flow from these starting points. Easily.

CHRIS

(PERCEPTIONS welcomes submissions of Commentaries on issues of concern to lesbians and gay men. Articles should be 750 words or less and contain the authors name and phone number for verification.)

SPEAKING OUT

Saskatoon's radio program for and about the lesbian and gay community has been "on the air" since May 2nd on Community Radio. It can be heard every Monday at 7:30 pm on the audio portion of TV Telecable 8.

I have have been quite pleased with the show thus far. I have had several interesting guests, including Barb Clay (discussing her social work practicum at the AIDS ward in San Francisco), Ernie (a Person-With-AIDS), Rev. Sally Boyle and Erin Shoemaker (from Affirm, talking about the issue of sexual orientation within the United Church) and others. Several readings of gay and lesbian short stories have been featured, as well as music and community announcements.

I am hoping to expand and improve on the show. There is a good possibility I can have a one-hour time slot in the near future, which will help immensely. The Community Radio Board of Directors are also considering purchasing telephone hook-up equipment soon, which would enable me to do long distance telephone interviews. This would greatly expand the scope of Speaking Out.

In order to bring about these needed changes, I will require help. A female co-host would be a great asset to the show. I feel that setting up some sort of collective or organizational structure is what is needed. We would need to look after such things as fund-raising and promotions.

I will be setting up an organization meeting sometime near the end of August and would encourage anyone interested in becoming involved to attend. Time and place of meeting

will be posted at Numbers, in the next issue of PERCEPTIONS, on Speaking Out and by word of mouth.

Meanwhile, I urge you all to tune in to Community Radio on Monday nights for the show. Please keep me up to date on community announcements and news items, as well as any suggestions as far as guests or show topics. This is your show.

SHAWN MOONEY

ROYALTY ARRIVES

Plans are well underway to make Saskatoon a part of the International Court System. The first Court was established in San Francisco over 25 years ago and has grown to encompass 65 cities across Canada and the United States. Canada's first Court was established in Vancouver 20 years ago and there are now Courts in a number of Canadian cities including Toronto, Calgary and Edmonton.

On Feb. 5 a general meeting elected the first board for Saskatoon's Court which is named The New Royalist Social Society of Central Saskatchewan. The board has applied for incorporation as a non-profit corporation in Saskatchewan. Memberships will be available to anyone once the charter is obtained.

A major goal of Saskatoon's Court is to advance an appreciation of the arts, including theatre and music. The group hopes to provide outlets for a variety of artistic, musical, dramatic and comedy performances. The Court is also an outlet for drag performances.

Another important goal of the Court is to raise funds to support a variety of community projects and endeavors. Saskatoon's Court is considering setting up a yearly \$500 scholarship for educational studies. They are also looking at making donations to local hospitals for items such as TV's for AIDS patients. They also plan to make donations to local gay groups to support their projects.

One major activity of the Court will be to sponsor a ball at which participants elect an Empress and Emperor who will reign for the following year. The two become representatives of Saskatoon to other cities with Courts. This year's Coronation Ball is planned for June 24 and is being held at the Manhattan Ballroom. Representatives from a number of other court cities including Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Seattle and Birmingham are expected to attend.

Each new court must be sponsored by an established court and Saskatoon's new court is being sponsored by the Court in Edmonton.

Saskatoon must raise \$1000 which will be put into trust for two years to ensure the Court charter.

Members of Saskatoon's Court performed for the first time as a Court in Edmonton on Feb. 24 and 25 at the Mr. and Ms. Gay Edmonton pageant. Saskatoon's Court will also be sponsoring a dance Mar. 25 at the Estevan Room in the Holiday Inn. The dance begins at 9:00 pm.

The New Royalist Social Society of Central Saskatchewan welcomes anyone who wishes to get involved through volunteering their time or money. Anyone interested can contact Rick at 244-7645 or talk to Keleigh at Numbers.

GENS HELLQUIST

IN YOUR AREA

SASKATOON

GROUPS

AFFIRM SASKATCHEWAN: Lesbians and gays in the United Church. Potluck supper & meeting first Sat each month. 652-6782. Box 7518, S7K 6K7

AIDS SASKATOON: PO Box 4062, S7K 4E3. Office: 309 - 220 - 3rd Ave S. AIDS Hotline 242-5005, out of town 1-800-667-6786.

CELEBRATION '90 - SASKATOON: Organizing group for Gay Games III. Box 8581, S7K 6K7 or call Lindsay at 656-4470.

COALITION FOR HUMAN EQUALITY (CHE): A gay/lesbian rights lobbying group, 215 Clarence Ave S, 652-6452

DIGNITY: Gay & lesbian Catholics, 665-9953, Box 9764, S7K 7G5.

GAY AL-ANON GROUP: Meets Sundays, 8:00pm, call Doug M. at 665-0931.

GAYS & LESBIANS AT THE U OF S (GLUS): Box 369 Sub PO Box #6, S7N 0W0, 244-4782. Open to gay students, faculty & staff.

GAYMATES: Penpal/contact club for gay men. Box 3043, S7K 3S9. Members across Canada.

LEATHER/LEVI PLAINSMEN: 244-1930, Box 3043, S7K 3S9. Support/social group for men into exploring leathersexuality.

LIVE & LET LIVE: An Alcoholics Anonymous group for gay men & lesbians wishing to quit drinking. Fridays, 8:00pm, Mayfair United Church, 902 - 33rd St W.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED SASKATCHEWAN: Support group for gays & lesbians who identify with Lutheran community. Box 8187, S7K 6C5.

METAMORPHOSIS '89: Box 302, S7K 3L3. A yearly Thanksgiving celebration & weekend of activities.

THE NEW ROYALIST SOCIAL SOCIETY OF CENTRAL SASKATCHEWAN: Saskatoon's Imperial Court. Contact Rick, 244-7645 or Keleigh at Numbers.

PERCEPTIONS: Box 8581, S7K 6K7. Office: 136 Ave F S. (side door). Prairies gay/lesbian newsmagazine.

PHOENIX HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES: 665-3399. Gay supportive counselling for gay men & lesbians. Coming out, AIDS issues, etc.

PWA NETWORK OF SASKATCHEWAN: Support group for persons with AIDS & ARC. Box 4062, S7K 4E3, 242-5005, 665-6292; Regina 525-0902.

NIGHTCLUBS

NUMBERS: 493A - 2nd Ave N. 665-0100. Private members club.

REGINA

GROUPS

AIDS REGINA INC: 2241 - 14th Ave, Box 432, S4P 3A2, 525-0902 Mon, Wed, Fri 8:00-10:00pm.

DIGNITY REGINA: Box 3181, S4P 3G7. Potluck supper & service 2nd or 3rd Sun. 569-3666.

EGALE-REGINA: Box 195, S4P 2Z6. A gay/lesbian rights lobbying group.

GAY COMMUNITY OF REGINA: Box 3414, S4P 3J8. Non-profit society which operates Scarth Street Station.

GAY COUNSELLING & INFORMATION LINE: Box 3414, S4P 3J8, Mon 8:00-10:00pm, Thur 8:30-10:30pm, message (306) 569-0125.

KOINONIA ("COMMUNITY"): Interfaith group of gays & lesbians. Sun evenings, 3913 Hillisdale St, Box 3181, S4P 3G7, Don at 569-3666.

LAVENDER SOCIAL CLUB: Box 671, S4P 3A3. Social club for women, monthly women's dances.

LESBIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN SASKATCHEWAN (LASS): Box 4033, S4P 3R9. Monthly potlucks, 522-4522 or 352-8397.

LIVE & LET LIVE REGINA: Gay Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon, Sat 7:30pm, Cathedral Recreation Centre, 2900 - 13th Ave (upstairs).

RECREATIONAL MIXED SOFTBALL: Sundays 6-9pm, Scarth St & 15th Ave, Contact Briene 565-3276

SECOND WAVE: Box 4033, S4P 3R9, A newsletter of lesbian news and opinion.

NIGHTCLUBS

SCARTH STREET STATION: 1422 Scarth St, Box 3414, S4P 3J8, Private club, closed Sundays.

SOUTHERN SASKATCHEWAN

SPRING VALLEY GUEST RANCH: Box 10, Ravenscrag SON 2C0. 295-4124, Bed & Breakfast, Emmett's Tea Room, etc.

WINNIPEG

GROUPS

AFFIRM: Gays & lesbians in United Church. Monthly meeting, 452-2853

COUNCIL ON HOMOSEXUALITY & RELIGION: Worship, library and counselling on religion. Box 1912, R3C 3R2

COUPLES NETWORK: PO Box 1661, R3C 2Z6

DIGNITY WINNIPEG: Roman Catholic church group Box 1912, R3C 3R2

FAMILIES OF GAYS: PO Box 1912, R3C 3R2

GAIE LIVRAISON: Reviews of books on homosexuality. Box 1912, R3C 3R2

GAY AA NEW FREEDOM GROUP: 942-0126

GAY FATHERS: 284-5208, Box 2221, R3C 3R5

GAYS FOR EQUALITY: Counselling, information, rap sessions, education & law reform, Box 1661 R3C 2Z6, 284-5208

GAY & LESBIAN ASSOCIATION OF STUDENTS & STAFF AT U OF M: Box 27, University Centre, U of M R3Y 2N2

LEGAL DEFENSE FUND: Box 1912, R3C 3R2

LESBIAN LINE: Tuesday evenings, 284-5208

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH: 270 Simcoe St, R3G 1W1, 775-4134

NICHIMAKAN NATIVE GAY SOCIETY: 616 Broadway Ave, R3C 0W8

PROJECT LAMBDA: Box 3911, Stn B, R2W 5H5

PROVINCIAL AIDS LINE: 945-AIDS, toll free 1-800-782-2437

VILLAGE CLINIC: Support services for people with AIDS. Pre- and post-test counselling, 453-0045, 709 Croyden

WINNIPEG GAY LESBIAN RESOURCE CENTRE: Library information line and services, #1 - 222 Osborne St S, R3L 1Z3, 284-5208, Box 1661

WINNIPEG GAY LESBIAN YOUTH: Rap sessions, coffee houses & workshops, Thursdays 7:30pm, #6 - 222 Osborne St, 474-2105

WINNIPEG GAY MEDIA COLLECTIVE: Produces "Coming Out" shown Tuesdays 8:30pm on cable TV, 786-3976, Box 1661, R3T 2N2

WINNIPEG LESBIAN GAY FILM SOCIETY: Co-sponsors Counterparts International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival & promotes gay/lesbian films

BUSINESSES

CLUB 200: 190 Garry St, gay piano bar

GIOVANNI'S ROOM: Bar for gay men, 616 Broadway, 786-1236

HAPPENINGS: Gay disco, mixed upstairs, women's bar downstairs, 774-3576, 274 Sherbrook St, upstairs

MS PURDY'S: Women only except Wednesday, 942-8212, 226 Main St.

THE OFFICE: Bath with rooms & lockers, 24 hour, 589-6133, 1060 Main St.

IN YOUR AREA

CALGARY

GROUPS

AIDS CALGARY: 228-0155, Speakers bureau, Hotline, Counselling.

APOLLO "FRIENDS IN SPORTS": PO Box 6481, Station D, T2P 2E1. Variety of sporting activity

CAMP 181 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: Box 702, Station M, T2P 1J5. Social activities

DIGNITY CALGARY: Support group for gay/lesbian Catholics, family & friends. 280-6817.

FRONT RUNNERS: Gay/lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous group. 265-8888.

GAY FATHERS: Contact Dan at 240-0659. Support and peer counselling.

GAYLINES CALGARY: 234-8973. Operates seven days a week from 7:00pm to 10:00pm.

INTEGRITY CALGARY: Box 21014, Place Concorde Postal Outlet, T2P 4H5. Gay/lesbian Anglicans and friends. (403) 262-3571.

LESBIAN INFORMATION LINES: 265-9458. Open Wednesdays from 7:00pm to 9:30pm.

LESBIAN & GAY YOUTH CALGARY: 262-1626, Phone-line Mon, Wed, Fri 7:00pm to 10:00pm. Social Sat 7:30pm, Rm 200A Old Y Centre, 223-12 Ave SW.

IMPERIAL SOVEREIGN COURT OF THE CHINOOK ARCH (ISCCA): Entertainment society, socials, drag shows. Box 1117, Stn M, T2P 2K9 or Gaylines.

LESBIAN MOTHERS DEFENCE FUND: 278-2927.

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH: 204 - 16 Ave NW. 277-4004.

THE LAVENDER TIMES: Monthly gay/lesbian publication. 223 - 12 Ave SW. T2R 0G9

NEW DESTINY - LESBIAN A.A.: Call Lesbian Info Line or Gayline for more information.

PROJECT PRIDE: Gay Games III organizing committee for Calgary's team. Cheryl 277-0347.

NIGHTCLUBS

318 PRIVATE CLUB: 318 - 17 Ave S.W. Mostly gay, women welcome.

THE GREEN ROOM: 1302 - 4 St S.W. Gay/lesbian, drag shows on weekends, lounge atmosphere.

TRAX PRIVATE CLUB: 1130 - 10 Ave S.W. Men only except Wed. Strippers certain nights.

OFF CENTRE EATERY & BAR: 111 - 15 Ave S.W. Mixed clientele, small pub & restaurant.

VICTORIA'S RESTAURANT: 308 - 17 Ave S.W. Mixed clientele. Open late on weekends.

THE WAREHOUSE & UNDERGROUND PUB: 733 - 10 Ave S.W. Mostly straight - gays welcome.

BATHS

GOLIATHS SAUNATEL: 308 - 17 Ave S.W. (rear entrance). Private club - men only. Small Pub and bath.

EDMONTON

GROUPS

AIDS NETWORK OF EDMONTON SOCIETY: 10704 - 108 St, S5H 3A3, 429-AIDS, Business Line 424-4767 Support for those with AIDS, informs public with a view to limit its spread.

AFFIRM: Lesbians and gays in United Church, Phone Barry at 432-7608.

CELEBRATION '90 - TEAM EDMONTON: Working towards Gay Games III & Cultural Festival. Call Kim at 434-4906 or Call at 434-7979.

DIGNITY: Lesbians and gays in the Catholic Church. Box 53, T5J 2G9. Barry at 469-4286.

FRIENDS OF AFFIRM: Friends of gays & lesbians in United Church. Barry at 432-7608.

GAYS AND LESBIANS AWARENESS (GALA) - CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE: Gays/lesbians working to obtain civil rights. Box 53, T5J 2G9, Liz at 489-7998 or Barry at 469-4286.

GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY CENTRE OF EDMONTON: Drop-in centre at 9917 - 112 Street, Box 1852, T5J 2P2. 488-3234.

GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH GROUP: For gay/lesbian youth 16-25. Sat 7-8pm, basement Westwood Unitarian Congregation, 11135-65 Ave. Mail: c/o Gay & Lesbian Community Centre.

GAYS AND LESBIANS ON CAMPUS (GALOC): For students & staff at the University of Edmonton, Box 75, Room 620, Students Union Bldg, U of A

GAYS FATHERS AND LESBIAN MOTHERS: c/o Gay and Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton.

GAY WIRE: Radio program for lesbian/gay community. Thur evening 6:00-7:00 on CJSR FM 88. Call 432-5244 or 424-1409.

IMPERIAL COURT OF THE WILD ROSE: Gay men (mainly drag queens) organized for social and fund-raising purposes. Call 428-9444.

INTEGRITY: Group for lesbian/gays in Anglican Church. John at 425-9017.

KAROS HOUSE: A Catholic Social Services run house with accomodation for PWAs. Call Catholic Social Services. 432-1137.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED: Group for lesbians and gays in Lutheran faith. Call Ernie 452-6016.

MANDATE SOBER: For gays and lesbians worried about alcohol abuse. Call Bernard at 482-4117

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH EDMONTON (MCC): Non-denominational group for gays/lesbians to worship in, Sundays 7:30pm Unitarian Church, 12530 - 110 Avenue. Phone 438-5168.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS: For gays/lesbians worried about substance abuse. Fridays 8:00pm, Call Bob 475-8157 or Neil 423-2242.

NORTHERN CHAPS: Support & social group for men wishing to explore leather and/or S/M. Box 11243, Edmonton Main Post Office, T5J 3K5

WOMONSPACE: Support, social, action group for lesbians. Basement 9930-106 St, 425-0511,

NIGHTCLUBS

BOOTS AND SADDLES: 10242 - 106 St. Call 423-5014.

NIGHTCLUBS

BOOTS AND SADDLES: 10242 - 106 Street, Call 423-5014.

FLASHBACK: 10330 - 104 Street, Call 428-9444.

ROOST: 10345 - 104 Street, Call 426-3150.

BOOKSTORES

COMMON WOMAN BOOKS -THE RADICAL BOOKSELLER: Extensive lesbian/gay non-fiction & fiction sections. 8724 - 109 Street. 432-9344.

F. SPEUR BOOKS: Used books with small gay/lesbian section. 10824A Whyte Ave. 439-4195.

GREENWOOD'S BOOKSHOPPE LTD: Excellent gay/lesbian section. 10355 Whyte Ave. 439-2005.

GRANDE PRAIRIE

THE PEACE GAY ASSOCIATION: Social & support group for NW Alberta, Box 1492, T8V 4Z3

LETHBRIDGE

LETHBRIDGE AIDS CONNECTION SOCIETY: 801 - 1st Avenue South, Lethbridge Health Unit, T1J 4L5

RED DEER

GAY ASSOCIATION OF RED DEER (GARD): PO Box 356, T4N 5E9.

PRAIRIE LEATHER

(Saskatoon) The leather community in western Canada continues to expand and this growth was evident in Saskatoon on November 20. Leather men and women from across the west were in Saskatoon for Gathering of the Clan II. This was the second year of what has become an annual gathering and educational weekend for leatherfolk and those who are curious about the leather lifestyle.

The weekend was hosted by C.L.U.B. Saskatoon with assistance and support from leather groups and individuals from across the west. The afternoon was spent in workshops discussing a variety of topics. Over 75 people attended those workshops to hear discussions about the roots of leather; the differences between "old guard" and "new leather"; sex, love and S/M; top/bottom respect and manners; Daddy's and their boys; negotiations and safewords within a scene; and how to ask for what you want without saying a word.

At a supper meeting representatives from five western Canadian leather groups met to discuss the formation of a new region for the annual Mr. Drummer contests. Mr. Drummer is a contest sponsored by the American leather publication *Drummer* which sees competitions across North America, and around the world, to vie for the title of Mr. Drummer International and Drummerboy in San Francisco each year. Western Canada has become the newest region in North America. Regions hold local contests with winners competing in the regional contest, which selects a winner to compete in San Francisco. Previously, western Canada was

part of the Northwest region which included northwestern US states.

The meeting agreed that Gathering of the Clan, which had been held in Saskatoon the first two years, should rotate to different cities each year and Winnipeg was selected to host next year's weekend. The events will also be held on the Remembrance Day weekends to afford more people time to travel and participate. Dates were also determined for the local Mr. Drummer and Drummerboy competitions as well as the regional contests.

The meeting also discussed ways to increase participation by leather women. Mr. Drummer contests are for men only while a Ms. International Leather competition is held each year as a separate event. The meeting agreed to include a competition for leather women during the Gathering of the Clan with the winner being sent to compete in the Ms. International Leather contest.

Winners in both the Ms. International Leather and Mr. Drummer competitions in western Canada are selected on the basis of how well they will represent the leather community to the general gay and lesbian community. Some discussion took place at the meeting about how the US competitions tend to be more oriented to appearance and the importance in western Canada of selecting winners on the basis of their ability to be ambassadors for the leather lifestyle.

During the evening, Club Numbers was packed for a series of leather fantasy performances. Members of groups from

across the west participated in the fantasy presentations which were popular with the audience.

There are now leather groups in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. (Check **In Your Area** for the group nearest you.) The groups are active in their respective cities raising money for community organizations and the Gathering of the Clans was no exception. C.L.U.B. Saskatoon, the weekend's sponsors, designated Gay & Lesbian Health Services as the charity which would benefit from the weekend. Club Numbers donated \$342 from their door charge and C.L.U.B. Saskatoon donated their \$81 profit from a Chinese Auction which was held during the fantasy presentations.

women grew to ten, more than the core of men who started the chorus two years earlier.

The number of members continues to grow and will soon be thirty voices strong, doubling the size from last year. The chorus is still fortunate to be able to hold its rehearsals in the acoustically and aesthetically splendid St. John's Anglican Cathedral.

Another change to the chorus is a new director. Their previous gay male director resigned and has been replaced by a non-gay woman. The expanded chorus is working towards its next concert which will feature both male and female voices.

Another young prairie chorus enjoying a boom in numbers is Edmonton's Vocal Minority. Their combined concert with Calgary's Rocky Mountain Singers last year was so successful in attracting new members that their ranks have swollen to almost fifty members. They have accomplished this growth in less than a year from a humble beginning of a dozen voices.

Vocal Minority are confident enough to have launched a busy concert schedule. By early July next year they will have performed five concerts, two of which will be combined concerts. In December they will repeat last year's highly successful joint concert with Calgary. The most northerly gay/lesbian chorus on the continent will be warmed in July by some welcome warm air brought in by the San Diego Men's Chorus.

PRAIRIES CHORUSES

(Saskatoon) Saskatoon's Bridge City Men's Chorus is now history. The look and sound of the two-year-old chorus has been changed with the introduction of lesbians to its membership. This change began as recently as September when a number of women expressed an interest in joining the chorus.

When a few women were informed that the chorus might be willing to give up its male only status if there were sufficient female voices to make a good balance one of them launched a recruitment campaign. In a few weeks the number of interested

THE CHOIR THAT WON'T SHUT UP

by Catherine Reininger

Edmonton Vocal Minority is a multi-talented group of primarily lesbian and gay people who sing choral music, and they do it wonderfully. Ranging in age from fifteen to sixty, they come from all walks of life to sing jazz, love songs, and tunes from musicals. They also sing music commissioned by The Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses (GALA). GALA is an international alliance of women's, men's, and mixed choruses dedicated to providing support and inspiration to lesbians and gays through excellence in choral arts. GALA can be truly proud of Edmonton Vocal Minority.

A reincarnation of a choir by the same name from the early 1980s, eleven singers came together in November 1992 to sing with Calgary's Rocky Mountain Singers, who came to Edmonton to do a benefit concert for the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre. By June of 1993, membership in Edmonton Vocal Minority had increased to thirty-three, and their performance was impressive. Today the choir numbers more than fifty and is open to anyone who wants to sing and, while the membership is primarily lesbian or gay, many others have joined to share the experience.

The ever-increasing membership of Edmonton Vocal Minority share much more than a love of music. A peer counsellor at the Lesbian and Gay Community Centre finds that this choral group provides a place to express the strong emotions her work generates. "I can pour all the love and passion and rage I feel into the music," Anne explains. She has always enjoyed singing and belonged to a lesbian choir in Montréal, but finds that having a mixed choir provides an added range of voices. Besides, many of the gay male singers have become like brothers to her and sharing a musical interest draws them closer.

A lean man with pale sandy hair confides that he is over sixty and not gay, but as a recycled teen, he enjoys the music, the

atmosphere and the challenge. "I used to work in sheet metal on a production line. I needed something to put the spark back into my life and music is a fantastic way to do that."

At weekly rehearsals, people become so involved in the music that the outer world ceases to exist. One young waiter finds his interactions with people to be so contrived and impersonal that he needs the choir to put some balance back into his life. He is quite introverted until he gets to rehearsal. There he can throw himself into the music and become united with the others who come together to laugh, learn, work and sing.

Janet was looking for a way to get out and join other gay and lesbian people in some sort of activity. "Besides being lesbian, I am part of a smaller minority of persons with a visibly disabling handicap," Janet explains. She wanted to find an activity that involved men from the gay community and when she learned about Edmonton Vocal Minority, it seemed perfect except she was afraid they might not accept her. She had no voice training, and sometimes sang off key, but she was determined to try. It was a good move. She found the women to be supportive, and the men very caring and aware. The experience has allowed her to take new risks and come out of the musical closet.

Now, as President of Edmonton Vocal Minority, Janet makes sure newcomers feel as welcome as she did. She is proud of the fact that this is a choir that will accept anybody who is committed to music, and give them a chance.

Dorothy not only sings with Edmonton Vocal Minority, she is also an accomplished flautist who performs with singer-songwriter Kathy Da Silva. Several of Kathy's original compositions will be sung by the choir in the upcoming year, and Kathy will be a special guest at the *Love à la Carte* concert on February 19, 1994 at Convocation Hall in Edmonton.

Valerie Lee, creator of the Dance Theatre of Canada, and Tony Olivares are just two of the dance troupe who are part of this exceptional choir. Tony sees the choir as a means of unifying the lesbian and gay community, but more than that, he sees it as an extended family. Partners and friends are frequently involved in the business of costumes, schedules, ticket sales and all the myriad details of performances, and as well, are an integral part of the choir's social events.

David Hick is one of those vital non-singing members of the choir. As General Manager, he looks after publicity, production, and all those niggling details that need to be attended to if the choir is to continue to flourish and grow.

The quality of the singing is due to the hard work and commitment of the choir members themselves, but also to the very impressive talents of both its conductor and accompanist.

David, the Artistic Director of Edmonton Vocal Minority, is an accomplished conductor of church choirs and school bands. He also teaches classes in choral conducting. He sings in a professional chamber choir and in an *a capella* group with five other men. His training, experience and warmth are crucial factors in the development of this extraordinary group. David sees himself as a facilitator, helping mem-

bers to express the music within them. Together, the choir, conductor and accompanist work to shape, blend, and eventually share their music.

The commitment is strong because, besides the challenge of refining and improving their music, the group enjoys itself. Having fun is what keeps them going.

Kirk, who is the choir's accompanist, is much more familiar with Bach than the material this choral group requires of him. He responds well to the challenge. His sense of humour, patience, and willingness to use his expertise to help individuals decipher the complex language of music has made him a vital member of the group. But it is the genuine caring, the camaraderie among this group of warm and talented people, that keeps Edmonton Vocal Minority strong and fosters the commitment to improving their skills.

Their music transcends all boundaries and personal goals. The performances are powerful and magnificent. While Edmonton Vocal Minority was organized as a creative outlet to empower its members and the lesbian and gay community, it does far more. It enriches all who listen. The music is wonderful. It empowers us all.

If you have not heard Edmonton Vocal Minority perform, there are a number of opportunities in 1994. They closed out 1993 with a cabaret in November and a December performance in Calgary with the Rocky Mountain Singers. In 1994 they will be presenting four concerts (all concerts are in Convocation Hall on the campus of the University of Alberta):

Love à la Carte, Saturday, February 19, 1994, 8:00 p.m. with special guest Kathy Da Silva.

Edmonton Vocal Minority joins JUBA in presenting the pulse, rhythm, and excitement of the music of... AFRICA! Saturday, April 23, 1994, 8:00 p.m.

Voices of Pride, Saturday, June 25, 1994, 8:00 p.m.

Edmonton Vocal Minority presents the San Diego Men's Chorus on Saturday, July 2, 1994, 8:00 p.m.

Subscribe! Be a patron, a sponsor, a friend. For further information, contact: Edmonton Vocal Minority, 9541 - 109A Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 1G2. Phone: (403) 424-1561.

HOME, HOMO ON THE RANGE

Hills of Lavendar

by Jane Chesebrough

As the earth warms and winter sheds her blanket, my mind reflects on the days of last summer. In a place seven hours from Edmonton, I found a refuge from the daily annoyance of homophobia; a healing place to commune with nature and enjoy the companionship of other lesbians and gay men.

This haven in the Cypress Hills of southwest Saskatchewan is a bed and breakfast owned and operated by Jim Saville. It was the place I chose to work for the summer season, with visions of my own cabin, horses on the range and, who knows, maybe a lone horsewoman riding over the horizon.

After my employer picked me up at the depot, we drove past miles and miles of hills and flatlands sparse with evidence of human dwelling. South of Maple Creek, past the Cypress Hills Park and left at Davis Creek Road. Some more kilometers, then we turned onto the driveway of Spring Valley Guest Ranch and Jim proudly announced that this was his place.

WHERE?? I saw nothing, except the driveway in front of me that seemed to disappear into the horizon, an endless expanse of land and sky. I was mystified until quite suddenly, to my surprise, the ground opened up to reveal a green coulee teeming with lush growth. Nestled in the midst of this valley oasis was a barnyard, beautiful flower gardens and an old turn-of-the-century home containing four guest rooms and a country tea room which welcomes not only the locals but also visitors from around the world.

Gay- and lesbian-friendly all the time, one weekend in particular caters exclusively to our community and, believe me, there is a real sense of community among the fifty or so men and women who gather here for the annual Ranch Rendezvous. The price is inexpensive for what you get: barn dances complete with line dance and ballroom lessons, picnics, hayrides, horseback riding, full brunches and banquets in

the yard, including pitchfork fondue (steak is placed on the tines of a pitchfork and cooked in a cauldron of hot oil). Talent abounds during this weekend, both from the guests and from the invited entertainers.

Where else can you awaken to a breakfast served from a covered wagon, take your plate to the seating area in the barn loft and visit with new friends while listening to classical harpist John Robertson? Folk singer/activist Peggy Ward from Calgary sang with her voice and heart, which had us laughing uproariously or moved to tears. Fun and games for all, generously hosted by Jim as a labour of love for his community and fully supported by his parents, whom you'll see helping out at

all the events. You won't forget their smiles and warmth.

I'm planning to be at this year's Rendezvous, July 29th to August 1st. Stay in the house, one of the tipis, or bring your own tent. Peggy and John will be returning. Whether you are new or coming for your sixth year, I hope to see you there! Ads for Spring Valley Guest Ranch are in this magazine and you are welcome to call Jim for more information

Written in memory of Dwayne Little, a big presence at these weekends, always ready to lend a hand. He was tragically taken from his loved ones in a car crash last summer, but I am sure he will be there in our hearts.

Growing up in a family that didn't function for me has forced me to develop my own concepts of family and community. That's no doubt one of the major reasons I've spent so much of my life working in community development. I need a community and I've discovered that others share that need.

Over the years I've watched the gay and lesbian community grow from a small group of mostly gay men who met in someone's private residence or a back corner of a bar that would tolerate us. As the community grew with the slow influx of more people willing to be part of a somewhat organized and identifiable community it also began to develop sub-communities. There are often separate lesbian and gay male communities and those get broken down into sub-groups according to age. There are the clubbers and the activists, the jocks and drag queens. This growth of sub-divisions occurs in all cities as the community begins to attract more people escaping their closet.

To a large extent the growth of these varied communities has been good as it allows people the opportunity to have their needs met by a group that more closely shares their needs. Some of the sub-communities interact with one another while others keep their distance. Some individuals do have an almost chameleon-like personality allowing them to be part of several sub-groups. To a large extent the varied sub-communities only relate to one another to any degree in party atmospheres like Pride celebrations. The other times the communities may come together is when the community is under attack from politicians or religious zealots.

I become concerned when I hear comments like "Just because we're gay doesn't mean we have anything in common." or "I wish those drag queens and leatherfolk would stay at the back of the parade" or "If we're ever going to win our right we have to show heterosexuals that we are just like them."

I do believe I share many common things with all gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and anyone else who doesn't measure up to the "accepted norm" of sexuality. I share thousands of years of oppression just because of who I love and have sex with. I share a history of struggling to escape the oppression of homophobia and heterosexism. I share the reality that there are still many people who would like to see a reversal of the gains we have made and a return to the oppression of the closet.

I'm also not prepared to dress up in a suit and tie to win equality. I have been part of the fight for justice and equality because I don't want to be just like a heterosexual. That is not the model which I want to use in my life. To ask leatherfolk and drag queens to go to the back of the bus is fostering a lie and denying the important part they have played in achieving the gains we have made. If you wear a suit and tie and are queer, great. But that is not who all of us are. If we are not all free from discrimination then none of us are free.

To some extent the lesbian and gay community is becoming ghettoized. Cities seldom have any contact with one another other than visits by individuals back and forth. We haven't had any form of national organization in more than a decade. Urban communities rarely reach out to those gay and lesbians who don't live in there unless individuals travel in for a evening or weekend. I believe we need to find ways to bring us closer as communities.

That's one of the reasons I'm excited about a new project I'm involved in with the agency I work for, Gay & Lesbian Health Services. We have started a new phase of our "Out In Saskatchewan" project that will see us reach out into smaller cities and rural areas and help gays and lesbians in those areas meet one another and build a community that meets their needs.

The time has finally come. Plans have been drafted. We can't delay any longer. My co-worker, Sheri, and I are finally ready to begin in earnest our program to reach out to lesbians and gay men in areas outside the two major cities of Saskatchewan. Our rural outreach project, which we've named "Out In Saskatchewan" is about to forge ahead.

I find myself excited about the prospect of going outside of Saskatoon, although Goodness knows that we can't keep up with the demands in Saskatoon. I also find myself somewhat unsure of what to expect. We know there are many gay men and lesbians in smaller cities, towns, villages and farms across the province and we also hear the reports about how homophobic rural Saskatchewan is. Will we be greeted with open arms, these two outfront queers, or will we be run out of town on a rail? I suspect it will be somewhere in between in most communities and the extremes in a few but we'll never know until we get there and stick our heads up as two queers from the big city.

Our project is two fold: to network lesbians and gay men in various areas and help them to develop support/social groups that meet their needs, and to educate professionals so they are able to offer quality services and support to gays and lesbians in their communities. Fairly simple objectives but really virgin territory for most gay/lesbian organizations.

I believe it's important for our community to reach out from the safety of our queer groups, bars, clubs, our ghettos, no matter how small they may be and provide support and encouragement to those who haven't found places where it's safe to be who they are. It seems that there's a real tendency for us to come out, find our safe little space and forget the struggles we endured in finding that safe space where we can share our lives with those who won't condemn. We lose sight of the fact that there are many who, for all kinds of reasons, haven't found a way and place where they can feel safe about being gay or lesbian.

The lesbian and gay community is really a composition of numerous smaller communities, split over many of the reasons that split our society in general: religion, sex, values, race, etc. We may come together in our bars and clubs and once a year during Pride Week but generally we are separated. And it makes sense that we are separated as we are a diverse community with a diverse range of issues that we can't all share. However, we are joined, whether we like it or not, because we share the common traits of loving members of our own sex and living in a society where many would like to persecute us because of that one common trait that differs from the majority.

When I think of the gay and lesbian community in its broadest context I think of those women and men who have not yet been able to reach a place where they can feel good about who they are and find a place and people that allows them to feel safe about being gay or lesbian. This includes my queer family who reside outside major urban areas. I'm fortunate enough to live in a community that has safe places for me to be although it wasn't all that long ago when those places were few and often not especially pleasant. I think that is a right that everyone should have.

I believe it's important that lesbian and gay communities in urban centres reach out and support lesbians and gay men outside their community. We can not afford to do otherwise. Our urban communities are fed by imports from outside. Our urban communities will be healthier for all of us if our rural family members don't migrate to our communities suffering the effects of growing up in a homophobic environment without support to assist in dealing with the hate and lies. Many lesbians and gay men prefer to live in a smaller community or on the farm and they need to be supported in that. We should all be able to live in the community we prefer without having to give up our lesbian or gay self.

After twenty-five years of lesbian and gay liberation we have made major strides but in many cases those victories only apply if you live in a larger urban area. Gay and lesbian liberation has yet to reach many parts of this country. It's

very difficult to stand up and say I am queer and will fight any discrimination when you have no support and you want to remain in your community. Can we really say we have won any victory when it only applies to some of us?

Whenever politicians debate some legislative change that will lift away another layer of discrimination in our lives, those votes in the legislature are always predictable. The majority of urban politicians support expanding our rights while rural politicians usually oppose any efforts to ease discrimination. That won't change until gays and lesbians outside our comfortable ghettos have the support to stand up and say "I live here and I expect you to support my rights." Lesbian and gay rights are still viewed as an urban issue and the myth prevails that we only exist in the larger cities.

CIRCLE OF TWO-SPIRITS

(Saskatoon) On Friday, September 9, the first meeting of a new Native Gay and Lesbian group was held, with 12 people in attendance. Circle Of Two-Spirits is a support, social, cultural, and educational group that will be meeting twice a week. A Healing Circle will be held on Mondays at GLHS at 7:00 and the regular meeting will be held on Saturdays at 7:00 also at GLHS.

The membership is open to gay and lesbian people of all ages who identify as Native. Non-Natives are welcome to learn Native culture as invited non-members. Planning is underway for future events that include round dances, sweats, coffee houses, a box social, and many other activities. A resource centre for two-spirited people is the goal for the future.

The group at the set-up meeting decided on a group decision-making process instead of other forms of committee. Every member has a voice and a vote.

The next meeting will be a traditional pot luck, Friday September 16, 7:00 at GLHS. For further information call GLHS or Lonnie Sinclair at 653-2482.

LAMBDA NORTH

(Prince Albert) Saskatchewan's newest gay and lesbian group continues to organize and grow in this Northern city. After trying out the name Northern Exposure the group decided to settle for something that would be more indicative of who they were and settle on the name Lambda North.

The group held its first meeting in October and has met monthly since then. They have formed committees to look after fund raising, social activities, peer counselling and structure. They are looking forward to becoming more active in the coming year with a variety of activities. It's first social event has been planned for December 16 and a video night and discussion is being planned for the next meeting on January 3.

The group hopes to work with Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS) in Saskatoon to provide phone counselling and information to lesbians and gay men in the Prince Albert area. GLHS has been looking for funding to provide a toll-free line for callers from outside the city and the group has indicated a willingness to help raise funds to start that service. They felt they didn't have the resources to open their own line and staff it on a regular basis.

"It's a really exciting group to work with," said Gens Hellquist of GLHS who has been working with the group to help them get started. "They are a very dynamic group of people and will definitely change for the better the situations lesbians and gay men deal with living in Prince Albert," Hellquist added.

At this point the group hasn't established local contact sources and is using GLHS to inform people about the group, its meetings and locations. Information about the group can be obtained by calling the Gay & Lesbian Line, 665-1224, in Saskatoon.

The other day I was sitting in a meeting of a committee of Gay & Lesbian Health Services (GLHS), the organization I work for, and we were discussing ways to reach lesbians and gay men to encourage them to support our organization as volunteers or through donations. Some committee members expressed that they often hear people say things like, "I'm out and my life is going OK so why do I need an organization like GLHS?" I, too, have heard similar comments over my years of working in the lesbian and gay community. I find such comments frustrating and to me it appears that those people have rather myopic vision when it comes to our community. I believe we all have a stake in supporting those organizations that are seeking to build a stronger and healthier community.

The five largest cities on the prairies all have organizations similar to GLHS in Saskatoon. There is the Winnipeg Gay/Lesbian Resource Centre, Pink Triangle Community Services in Regina, Gaylines in Calgary and the Gay & Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton. Even smaller cities like Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert and Brandon have lesbian and gay community groups. What all these groups have in common is a commitment to providing support to people coming out as well as for those already out but facing difficult times in their lives. Most of them are also actively involved in educating people in their communities about homosexuality and our lives. Many have resource libraries and make referrals to supportive health-care and other professionals. They all share the common goals of making all our lives better by combating homophobia at all levels.

To say I'm out and therefore don't need support from a lesbian or gay organization is rather short-sighted. I don't believe that coming out is an event that occurs at a certain point in our lives never to be revisited again. Coming out is a process which is ongoing throughout our lives. Whenever we find ourselves in a new situation, starting a new job, meeting new people, moving to a new community, we are faced with the decision of how much about our

lives will we tell these people. We have to decide again how out we will be in that environment.

Whether we deal directly with any of these organizations or not, we all get something out of their existence. For starters, all the groups are working to reduce homophobia and correct the myths and lies that are perpetuated against us. This will make it easier for us all to be open about our lives when we find ourselves in new situations. We all definitely benefit when levels of homophobia are reduced in our society and the myths and lies are confronted. The benefits may not be immediately tangible but they are there nevertheless.

We all get something out of it when it becomes easier for people to come out and do so in a healthy way. We are part of a community that has enormous health problems ranging from suicide, alcoholism, mental illness, drug abuse, low self-esteem, HIV and AIDS. These health issues will impact on each of us at some point in our lives and we will all lose people who are part of our lives because of these health issues. All of these health issues are directly tied to homophobia and the myths and lies that abound in our society about our lives.

If we are connected at all to the lesbian and gay community we probably already have and will most certainly watch many of our friends and acquaintances die prematurely because of these health issues. And if you think HIV and AIDS are strictly caused by a virus you are mistaken. Today many people are becoming infected by HIV and getting AIDS because of low self-esteem and alcoholism caused by the enormous levels of homophobia that exist in our society. The virus may bring about their death but it is the homophobia that causes them to feel worthless and not important enough to protect themselves from the virus.

The conditions under which we live have changed enormously over the past 25 years. The changes that have occurred in attitudes towards us would not have been accomplished without the existence of the many groups that have worked to provide sup-

port in our community and education to the general community over those years. While we're having a drink or dancing in our local queer club, having supper in our local lesbian/gay café or restaurant or shopping in our local queer store, we need to keep in mind those commercial establishments might not exist if it hadn't been for the work done by community groups. Those groups have worked to create a healthy environment and reduce homophobia and that has contributed immensely to the growth of a commercial gay and lesbian community.

I continually hear about how our community has such a wealth of talent in it or how we control so much of the disposable income in this country. At the same time I am aware of so many important groups in our community that are struggling with too few resources, human or financial, to meet the many needs. There are many talented people working hard in the various organizations in our community and there are those who regularly make financial contributions to ensure the continuation of those organizations. I wonder how different things would be if we could tap into more of that wealth of talent and finances. I suspect those community groups could do even more wonderful things and would be able to more quickly eradicate the homophobia that affects all our lives in so many ways.

So the next time someone asks you to help out a queer group in your community, consider the possibility that the group may assist your next friend or lover in coming out. Consider the possibility that the work they are doing to erase homophobia will make the next job you get a more comfortable environment to work in as a lesbian or gay man. Consider the possibility that you may need non-homophobic support at some time in your life to help you through a crisis and that group may be there to provide you with that support or they can refer you to someone who can provide that support in a caring and non-judgmental way. Consider the possibility that they might not be there because when you were asked to help out you said, "What do I get out of that group being in my community?" *

INVISIBLE FAMILIES

(Saskatoon) Parents, and their partners and children, are a part of the gay, lesbian, and transgendered community in Saskatoon. Visible sometimes, they can be seen with their children at Pride picnics or events they have organized themselves. However, often they are an invisible, albeit a numerous, minority in the community; a minority that deals with all the issues of parenting and more. Parents, their partners, and children face the added challenges of creating and nurturing their families in a heterosexist culture.

A Gay and Lesbian Parents and Partners group started in January at GLHS, and at that January meeting people identified definite needs they wanted to see met. These centred around community support for their children, parenting skills development, and the chance for parents, partners, and children to meet and share with each other.

Specific feedback from talking to people included the following expressed needs: information on legal issues (divorce, custody, access); to learn how to be a better parent and adult; children needing to spend time with other children of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered parents; to hear each other's stories and our children need to hear each other's stories also; strategies to help a child cope with his/her own coming out process; information on disclosing to our children in a safe way; childcare is necessary so we can go to community events and groups; families must have opportunities to get together and socialize; non-parent and step-parent partners should have support to deal with their specific issues; access to community resources and literature to help us deal with the many issues in our lives.

The Gay and Lesbian Parents and Partners group addressed similar concerns with a series of objectives and workshops. The group made some headway into organizing topic discussions, book-

ing a series of speakers, and organizing some social events. Initial interest was high, however, attendance declined over the spring and summer months. But people were still expressing needs relating to parenting issues. Because of this, the board of GLHS has looked at how to better address the needs of parents, partners, and children in the community.

First of all, what seems to need to be done is to get a broad range of input from parents, partners, and children about what kind of group would best suit their needs. To do this, GLHS will hold a forum to invite responses from parents, partners

and children in the community. This meeting will be at 7:30 PM on Tuesday, September 26 at Gay and Lesbian Health Services, 241 – 2nd Avenue South, 3rd floor. Free childcare will be provided. Secondly, the Board of Directors of GLHS has made a decision to make the gay and lesbian parents group a GLHS member group in order to better support and provide resources for this part of the community. By gaining input from parents, partners, and children, and by providing support to them, it is hoped they will become more visible and much more heard in Saskatoon's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community.

Every year as part of Lesbian & Gay Pride festivities, Gay and Lesbian Health Services honours four members of our community with the GALA awards for their contributions to the Saskatoon Gay and Lesbian community. This year I was honoured to be one of the recipients. When the time came to prepare our speeches I, like several of the other recipients, had a lot of difficulty finding the right words to say. The common thread of difficulty we all had was that we believed that everything we do as members of our community is more of a benefit to us personally then to the Gay and Lesbian community our efforts are directed towards. I decided to speak from the heart describing my experiences as a member of the Gay and Lesbian community hoping that the audience would see who is receiving the honour, my support systems. The following paragraphs are from my speech and I'm grateful for this second opportunity to recognize the importance of family, friends and organizations, like Gay & Lesbian Health Services, in giving us a place where we belong.

Three years ago I was faced with what seemed to be a difficult decision. I could continue down the path of self denial and self loathing or I could come to terms with the fact that I was gay. Thanks to Gay & Lesbian Health Services my decision was a lot easier to make. I did not want to turn to drugs, alcohol or suicide so I picked up the phone and called GLHS's peer support line hoping to find alternative solutions. As a result of that call my out look on life literally changed over night. Months later I finally had the courage to go to GLHS and I have never looked back since.


The volunteers, staff and board members of GLHS have given me so much over the past three years. The best way I can describe my early experiences with GLHS are: they were my voice when I was too ashamed to speak, they were my backbone when I could not stand up for myself, they were my teachers when I desperately needed knowledge, they were my family when I felt all alone. With the help of Gay & Lesbian Health Services I am able to have a voice, educate others, and love myself as well as others unconditionally. GLHS has invested so much time and effort into my future, everything I have done as a member of that organization, I believe is a return on their investment. The relationship between GLHS and its volunteers is reciprocal, both counterparts benefiting from each others growth and

achievement. I am honoured to be part of that cycle.

As a contributing member of the Gay & Lesbian community I was also able to establish a personal support system I call my Queer family. I have a diverse Queer family which includes gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people. Their diversity is a benefit to me personally, communally, and professionally. They are a group of people I consider family because even when I'm by myself I'm never alone, they are always with me. I would especially like to thank my Momma Dykes for their guidance and my partner, Trevor, for all the sacrifices he has made over the past 7 months because he understands my dedication to Gay & Lesbian Health Services.

Before I finish I have one more support system that I have to recognize. Unfortunately my mother could not be here tonight but I would like to recognize her as the most important role model in my life. I hope one day I can have as much strength, courage and conviction as she does. Two years ago, when she came to visit me in Saskatoon I finally decided to reveal my sexual orientation to her. After several false starts and her constant encouragement, despite my fear of rejection, I told her I was attracted to men, that I was Gay. Without voicing any concerns she turned to me and said, "Did you think I would love you any less?" Since then she has been the voice of reason to the rest of my family and I could not ask for more.

I remember the fear and anxiety I felt when I started my coming out process. Staying awake at night, wondering if disclosing my sexual orientation was worth the risk of rejection. Now I realize that coming out was my only option. I could never regret it because all my achievements throughout the past three years are directly related to revealing my gayness. The closet is a detrimental prison that weakens and eventually destroys the lives of the people who inhabit it. Gays and lesbians free themselves from homophobia by becoming involved within our community. I encourage everyone to seek out people to help you take those first steps out of the closet because when you are a member of the gay and lesbian community you never stand alone.

I am honoured and I look forward to continuing my involvement at GLHS as well as within the Saskatoon Gay & Lesbian Community. Thank you. 

I am writing this article to express some of my concerns and disappointment with the "gay community." Some of you are familiar with who I am and yet others may not be. For those of you who do not know me, I'll tell you a bit about myself.

I am originally from a small farming community in Saskatchewan. I come from a family with an older brother and sister and a younger brother. I have a mom and a dad, as well as many other relatives. I was quite popular in school and the community in general. During my years of growing up there I knew that there was something different about me. I had a very good idea what it was, but did not understand the impact that this difference would eventually have on my life. You see. I was physically, emotionally and sexually attracted to members of my sex. As far as I knew this was something that was wrong, evil and brought me to hating myself. There was nothing more in the world that I wanted other than to be "normal."

After high school graduation I moved to Saskatoon. It was here that I discovered that I wasn't the only one who felt like I did. Over the following few years I met and had sex with other men. After each encounter I felt more and more disgusted with myself. I desperately lived in fear that my family or others would find out about my "dirty little secret." Most of my encounters took place in the "cruising park" during the darkness of the night. This is not exactly the most healthy environment. In 1991, seven years after graduation, I discovered the "gay bar." Not knowing what to expect, I eventually worked up the courage to walk in. To my surprise everyone in there appeared to be "normal." I finally found a place that I could be safe. Or could I?

The lifestyle of masking my fears through drinking, partying and only being able to be myself in the confines of a dark bar eventually took its toll. From one failed "relationship" to the next I began to lose hope of a happy life. I knew of no positive role models and of no one to talk to for help. I began to hate myself more and more as each week passed. This was evident in my reduced performance in my classes at the university. Feeling that all hope was lost, I attempted to take my life in December of 1991. I failed. While I was in the hospital recovering, I was still unable to say anything to anyone. It was at this point I had to make a decision to either live or die. I decided to live.

During the Christmas holidays I met someone who showed me that it was possible to have a happy life and be gay at the same time. Although this was a short friendship, the new hope that was instilled into my being still lives on. This person will forever be in my heart. The following spring I decided to move to Edmonton and escape from the discomforts in Saskatoon. This was an extreme measure to have to take, but proved helpful. During the summer of 1992, while talking with some of my new friends in Edmonton, I came to a remarkable discovery. Prior to this I was always worried that my family and friends would not accept me if they really knew who I was. Suddenly it dawned on me that they should be just as worried whether or not I would accept them. I began to like myself.

In September of 1992 I came to Saskatoon to visit my family and tell them my "secret." I was quite prepared for them to disown me, but felt this would be better than lying all the time. I was fortunate; they understood. There are

still others who do not understand, but now I have at least my family's support.

During the years that followed I began to like myself more and more. As a result I have developed much closer friendships, drastically improved my performance at university and, above all, have a new found hope for life. In an effort to try and prevent others from having to go through this same pain and turmoil, I began to volunteer with the "Gay Men's Outreach Crew" in Edmonton. It was from here that I saw one person can make a difference.

In the summer of 1995 I returned to Saskatoon to complete my studies. In the months that followed I found myself falling into the same destructive patterns that I left behind so many years earlier. Once again I had to make the decision to live happily. Being a sociologist, I began to look at what was the difference between Saskatoon and Edmonton that could cause this to happen. The conclusion that I came up with was the lack of support services available and, above all, the unwillingness of the "gay community" to become involved in change.

The choice that I was left with was either to move again or to become active and make a difference. Not wanting to see others living in such pain, I decided to become involved. This last spring I accepted a position with AIDS Saskatoon as the Men's Outreach Project Coordinator. Shortly after, I also became a volunteer with Gay and Lesbian Health Services. It was in these two organisations that I met other caring and compassionate people who were also troubled by the dysfunctionality in our community.

This brings me to why I am writing this article. Over the last few months I have become very disappointed with the lack of response from the "gay" community. Both, Gay and Lesbian Health Services and the Men's Outreach Project rely heavily on volunteers to ensure the success of our programs. Although we do have some very good volunteers and we appreciate their efforts tremendously, we do not have enough. I am tired of constantly hearing criticisms from individuals that we are not doing enough and what we are doing is not good enough. We can only work with what we have and without your support that makes our job much harder.

As a result I have had to make some tough choices the last couple of weeks. If I do not get a better response from the established "gay" community I am going to have to make program cuts. This bothers me in the fact that during this process lives may be lost. With out proper programs others will end up in the same turmoil I went through without anywhere to go for support. Not only will we have loss of value in one's life, we also run the risk of losing more lives to suicide. Next to aboriginal youth, gay youth have the second highest rate of suicide. This is the reality of our agencies. Without your help these numbers will continue to rise. Can you live with this? I can't.

As a last effort I am asking for individuals, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, to please help. Your individual contribution can make a difference. This plea goes out to those who have made it through the process of accepting themselves and to those who are presently in the process.

PEOPLE ARE DYING... DO SOMETHING!!! 

We live in a society that all too often wants to view life as being either black or white. While some pale shades of colour are slowly seeping onto the palette, there are still many areas where the only accepted colours are black and white.

This has long been the case with sexual orientation although there are subtle shades of pink showing up in the national fabric. However when it comes to gender it's still very much a black and white thing. There are men and then there are women. The rules have been relaxed somewhat lately or maybe we have just developed a more diverse set of rules. But there are still rules about being a man and a woman that most of us adhere to.

Growing up gay has caused me to look askance at many of those rules. If I challenge myself about the rules around loving and fucking with another man then why shouldn't I challenge other rules that don't feel right to me. I realize that we need to have some shared rules in society. Things like 'thou shall not kill' but we have too many rules especially about how we should feel and how we should love.

I have great respect for those pioneers who confront the rules that prevent them from exploring their true potential as a human. Last summer I had the opportunity to interview one of those pioneers, David Harrison. I first met David over two decades ago when she came out in Saskatoon as a young lesbian, Catherine. I got to know Catherine as she dated my dear friend Elizabeth. Like many lesbians and gay men who came out in Saskatoon, Catherine eventually move on to another larger city to begin her exploration of herself in relationship to the world. Over the years I have followed her journey as Elizabeth kept in regular touch with Catherine and would later fill me in on what Catherine was up to.

I kept up on her journey as she moved to San Francisco, studied acting and got involved in a relationship with a male to female transsexual, Kate Bornstein. Occasionally I'd run across an article written by Kate about her own journey and the journey that other male to female transsexuals go through. It gave me an insight into the women that Catherine was in love with and at times an insight into Catherine. When Catherine made her decision to become David, I learned about it from Elizabeth.

When I discovered that David was returning to Saskatoon to stage his one-man show *Female to Male: The Journey of David Harrison* I looked forward to seeing David again. After seeing his show I talked with David in my back yard. It wasn't an interview in the traditional sense but rather a conversation about gender, roles and rules. It was interesting to hear David's view on these things, how his journey has shaped his perceptions, and how similar were they to my views that had been shaped on a different journey.

The conversation lasted nearly two hours and covered numerous topics including David's change in gender. Some of the conversation went as follows:

Gens: *How has it felt coming back as a man?*

David: It's felt great! Basically it's not so much as coming back as a man but I'm coming back as myself. I feel like I'm more here that I ever was before. It's interesting walking around in the body I'm now, which is a male body, because I just feel different. It kind of shows me how far I've come.

Gens: *You talked about flying in to Saskatoon and getting choked up. Maybe that was because you were returning as yourself.*

David: To be honest, in San Francisco I would daydream about coming back to Saskatoon.

Gens: *Your ex Kate Bornstein talks about the constraints of gender in our society, how we tend to look at there being only two genders. What's your take on that?*

David: I really do think there's a continuum. I think there's more variation within a (quote) gender. I think the differences and similarities are not based on gender. Like even hormonal levels. There are more variations within one gender than cross-gender. I think hormones do certain things. I do feel different that I did before being on testosterone. To me that agrees with me.

Gens: *What is that difference that you feel?*

David: The difference I feel is that I'm calmer. Which is very different than what people think about testosterone being the 'evil' drug. You ask a bunch of males to females and they'll say when they get put on estrogen they immediately calmed down and when you ask female to males they say they calmed down with testosterone.

I think it has to do with chemistry and identity and all kinds of things. So I feel calm and much more in my body. I like my body now. I didn't think I'd like body hair but I like mine. I feel like a bear, a baby bear. I like that my voice is lower. I just feel like I'm not holding back all this stuff.

The difference is very blurred because I still feel that other person. To be honest, I think that I feel that I'm ultimately without gender. I'm most comfortable expressing myself to the world in a body in a male body. In terms of my spirit I feel I'm a mixture. For some reason this is much more comfortable for me.

Gens: *In our society we have some fairly rigid rules about gender and sexes.*

David: Yes. Kate goes into it in much more detail. She's very well read on the stuff. The way I gather my take on gender is very much through experience. I kind of feel it. It's not a really intellectual thing for me.

I'm interested in exploring this whole way gender and sexual orientation intersect. Being transsexual one is confronted by it because of how

other people deal with us. You knew me when I came out as a lesbian and here I am now I'm two-and-a-half years into my gender change and I'm attracted to men which I really wasn't that much when I was younger.

For me here, I am more attracted to men now and I have to figure out how I'll relate sexually to men because I'm not interested in straight men. I have been with straight men but they are often very confused because I haven't had lower surgery so they think, 'OK female genitals - must be a female'. I think that really does a number on them.

The men I've had the best times with are the ones who either don't put a label on their sexual orientation or say they're bisexual. The main reason being is that being with me puts into question somebody's sexual orientation. If it's a straight man and you're sexually attracted to me, "Oh God, if I like this I must be gay." If it's a gay man, "Oh God maybe I'm straight." If a person is bisexual or fluid there's an adjustment that's already been made.

I think there are people out there that I can relate to. I just have to take responsibility and educate them.

Gens: *It must get tiring to feel you have to be educating all the time.*

David: Sometimes it's like I wish someone else had done this. I want to have a relationship with somebody who'll relate to me as a person and we connect sexually. In reality, everybody has certain body preferences about what kind of body. I guess I'd like to see it where it's not such a big deal.

Gens: *In some ways you've been in a unique situation of having the opportunity to live as a woman and as a man. We hear a lot in our society about men having privilege. Have you noticed that at all?*

David: To some degree. It's hard to tell sometime. I think it's there. The place where I've noticed it the most is that I have the freedom or I feel safe on the streets at night. The other thing is that there is a lot more permission to take up more space physically. To sprawl out to take the assumptive about yes I'm going to get what I want and not have to hold back on being assertive. I think I still have my politeness thing going on but I'm much more forthright than before and part of that I think is that the hormones do affect that. But I think a lot of that is that nobody questions that in a man. With a woman it's still seen as completely different. You can have completely similar behaviours in a man and a woman and it will be interpreted totally different.

People listen to men more but then it's hard to tell because I'm also more confident with who I am and I feel that I know myself better. Even in just superficial social situations I'm more likely to be listened to now.

These are subtle things and I had yet to think about it.

Well I don't think am I being too loud or am I being too pushy or demanding or am I taking too much space. When I used to sit on the subway train I'd always sit so I didn't take up very much space but now I do sprawl out more but I try to do it in a way that doesn't infringe on other people's space. I can take up more space without infringing on someone else's space.

Gens: *It sounds like more permission to be in the world.*

David: Yes. I think that some of that is the feedback that I've got from other people and some of what goes on in my head of what I think I'm really able to do. A lot of it's the message I get from myself based on my programming about what men can do and what women can do. I still feel I'm sorting things out about it.

I'm realizing I didn't give myself permission to do things before and I could have actually but I didn't have the awareness that I could have.

Gens: *In your play you have one line that indicates that you have been accused of deserting the sisterhood.*

David: I actually haven't had that personally but that very often, I think, is what a lot of lesbians do tend to think about female to male transsexuals. That if one is a female to male transsexual then one hasn't embraced feminism and it's basically buying into male privilege or that you can't accept being a lesbian. It's the you're a traitor type of thing.

I used to think that about 15 years ago. I think there's always a grain of truth in any stereotype. There are probably people who have different reasons but going through a gender change is a lot of work and a hell of a lot to go through just to get a better job.

There's also this assumption that transsexuals go through gender change to become heterosexual and that's not really the case. The information I have is that about 50% of male to female transsexuals identify as lesbians and I'm starting to hear more about female to male transsexuals who identify as gay or bisexual men.

Kate emphasises over and over again that sexual orientation and gender identity are two different things and issues.

Gens: *Again I tend to think that we look at sexual orientation as a black or white issue. You're either heterosexual or queer.*

David: And then if one's queer there is no room for any movement around that. I've seen people slide all the way. Some people are very much that's the way they are. Some people are very heterosexual and they just know they are and some people are gay and that what they know they are. There's a lot of people who slide at different times in their lives.

I never expected to go through a gender change. I thought I was a 5½ on the Kinsey scale but I found out it wasn't as solid as I thought it was. I've changed so much that it leads me to think that if it shifts for me it could shift for other people.

Our conversation went on for much longer and evolved into a discussion of David's journey of becoming a male after living for many years a woman. David's perceptions on gender, roles and rules had given me a number of things to think about.

While we have heard a lot about male to female sex changes we still don't hear many perspectives from females who have become men. These days approximately 50% of the sex changes performed are females to male and David provided me with some insights on what that experience can be like. [2]

For some reason I find myself, around this time of year, nostalgically looking through pictures, reading past correspondences, and reflecting on highlights of friendships both past and present. As this trip down memory lane continues, I notice that the bulk of my knowledge concerning lesbians and their issues has been the result of deep personal relationships with members of the lesbian community. My reflection on these relationships soon turns to concern over my lack of formal research into lesbianism and my failure to encourage other gay men to learn about the lesbian community. As I continue to ponder this, I notice that there have been many glaring instances of ignorance that I have witnessed in myself and other gay men. It is those instances of ignorance that lead me to write this article.

Through the years I have read a variety of sources, fiction and non-fiction, about the queer community.

However, the majority of those sources talk about the gay male community exclusively or they examine the queer community as a whole without indicating possible differences between gay men and lesbians. I can remember sometimes skipping over chapters devoted exclusively to lesbian issues, figuring that they were not relevant to me. When I discussed this issue with some of my lesbian friends they acknowledged that they read more about lesbians than gay men. However, when talking with gay men and lesbians, it has been my experience that lesbians are more knowledgeable about gay men's issues than vice versa. There is nothing wrong with gay men focusing their knowledge-gathering around issues concerning gay males, but in order for us to foster a healthy queer community we must start educating ourselves about the lesbian community. Unfortunately, far too often the gay and lesbian movement has focused on the needs of gay males while lesbians have become frustrated because they lack an adequate venue to voice their opinions. This problem needs to be addressed because this type of misogynistic behaviour cannot continue.

Some of my most memorable experiences with my lesbian friends have involved watching lesbian films and the discussion of lesbian issues that often followed. The accuracy of the portrayal of lesbians in movies often leads to lengthy thought-provoking discussions of what it is like to be a lesbian in the straight and queer communities. As our discussions continued I found myself reflecting on some of my experiences of watching lesbian films in which both gay men and lesbians were present. To my disappointment I noticed a common pattern inevitably occurs during the watching of those films. As the movie unfolds and the characters start a romantic interlude, it is almost guaranteed that one of the gay men, in the audience, will make a comment like: "That's gross," "That's just sick," or "Yuk, naked women!" I recognize that, for some, those comments are said in an attempt at humour, but what kind of message is that conveying to lesbians about gay men? I do not want anyone thinking that as a gay man I find the female form repulsive and that lesbian sexuality grosses me out. I think that portrayals of lesbian sexuality are beautiful

expressions of intimacy (as I would for portrayals of both gay and straight sex). I believe as gay men we have to show more respect towards lesbians by refraining from such comments and that we need to examine why we feel the need to say such derogatory things.

As gay men, we have to recognize that, despite the fact we may be more aware of the oppression of women and lesbians than straight men are, we are not immune to behaving in a sexist manner. Unfortunately, being a member of a marginalized group does not mean that you will be understanding or respectful of other marginalized

people. Some of the behaviour we engage in clearly shows a lack of respect for what is traditionally considered female. A gay man using terms such as "girl," "queen," "girlie girl," "slut," and "bitch" as a way to assert dominance over another gay man, while involved

in a catty banter, reflects the dominant society's value of male over female. This is further perpetuated by the valuing of gay men who are "tops" (dominant in sexual activity) over "bottoms" (submissive in sexual activity) and of masculine gay men over feminine gay men. We cannot continue to act in such a manner and we must make a conscious effort to eliminate such behaviour from our daily interactions.

Another area of neglect concerning lesbian issues within the queer community is the lack of advocacy around lesbian health issues. No one can deny the tremendous impact lesbians have had on all levels in the fight against HIV and AIDS (which has devastated the gay male community). Without the support of the lesbian community our fight to prevent and find a cure for HIV and AIDS would not be where it is today. Yet, many of us in the queer community are ignorant to the devastating effects breast cancer has had on the lesbian community. If we do not start addressing this health crisis (among other health issues) in the lesbian community then we are going to lose many of those women who have supported us throughout the era of AIDS. We have to demand more research into the prevalence of breast cancer within the lesbian community. I was disheartened, when I tried to do research on this issue, that the only information I could find on lesbians and breast cancer was a handful of pamphlets. It is important that the queer community remains vigilant in its advocacy and education around HIV/AIDS issues, but we cannot do this by choosing to ignore other health issues.

Several times it has been brought to my attention that *PERCEPTIONS* seriously lacks lesbian content and we are trying to change that, but we need more lesbians contributing to our magazine. All our writers are volunteers (and mostly, if not all, males) so often gay men's issues are over-represented in these pages. Therefore, I encourage more submissions to *PERCEPTIONS* by the lesbian community in the form of articles, forum pieces and letters. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the lesbians that have taken the time to share with me their lives and concerns. I appreciate your understanding when I was ignorant and your support of the gay men's community. ■

*Being a member of a marginalized group
does not mean that you will be
understanding or respectful of other
marginalized people.*

NALBACH DIES

(Saskatoon) A former resident of Saskatoon and one of the early founders of the organized lesbian and gay community died recently in New York City. Dan Nalbach was a professor in, and later head of, the Drama Department at the University of Saskatchewan during the 1960s and 1970s.

Nalbach, along with Gens Hellquist, rented a post office box and placed a listing in the Vancouver underground newspaper *The Georgia Straight* in March of 1971. The listing simply read "Saskatoon Gay Liberation, Box 3043, Saskatoon, Sask." From the people who responded to that ad, along with a few others, meetings were held in the summer of that year which lead to the formation of Saskatoon Gay Action which begat a number of other groups in the lesbian and gay community.

During the summer and fall Nalbach hosted a series of parties at his 11th Street house where donations were solicited to help raise funds to begin Saskatoon's first gay and lesbian group.

Nalbach, who could often be outrageous, was also known as Gladys Stoford, the matriarch of the Stoford family. He was also known to be generous in supporting gay men during their first forays into the gay and lesbian community.

Nalbach left Saskatoon in the 1970s to retire to Montréal where he lived for a few years before moving to New York to pursue his goal of being an actor. He had bit parts in a few movies and commercials and was one of the featured stars of the little known movie *The Gig*.

While little is known of the exact circumstances of his death, it's believed he died of a heart attack in late May or early June in his apartment in New York. He is survived by his three Stoford daughters in Saskatoon and blood family in Buffalo, New York.

I hate to admit it, but I love Regina. I came here as an 18-year-old to attend the University of Regina, and never looked back. I was an introvert, a socially inept computer geek and had a horrible, evil secret that I kept in reign with the guise of Right-wing Christianity. But I quickly made friends and broke out of the shell I had built, weakening those supposedly sturdy closet walls I had built. Two years later, I came out and I haven't regretted a single moment. I turned into an extrovert with a wild sense of humour and a high energy level, which I began to use to benefit others.

Now, I am proud of what I have done. I have chaired a GLB Youth group. I founded Gays, Bisexuals and Lesbians at the University of Regina. I've volunteered for AIDS Regina and the Gay and Lesbian Community of Regina. I am now the chair of Pink Triangle Community Services, a fledgling organization almost in it's 5th year. I am also 23-years-old and the gay, lesbian and bisexual community in Regina horrifies me.

I am definitely too young to be so jaded, but I have seen too much to be as optimistic as I once was. I've seen each and every one of these groups suffer due to a lack of interest. Why? Because Regina is a Part Time Community. That means of course, that a lot of people are only really open about being gay during the hours in which the bar is open, mainly on Friday and Saturday nights. It's a sad way to live.

Why do I say this? Because very few are willing to help out in any other way in the community. I thank those of you who do help out (Curt, Michele, Ormond, Jean, Lorne, Cory and countless others), but the rest of you should be deeply ashamed. If you wonder why there is fear and hatred towards homosexuality, look at yourself. What have YOU done for the community? What have YOU done to combat homophobia, to educate others, to promote health and well-being within your community? Have you once considered helping out where your talents can be used? if not, consider it.

Many organizations are suffering or failing because people can not find the time to volunteer or donate money. However, many are able to find the time and money to get drunk at the bar every weekend. Some of this time and money could be spent combating homophobia and creating safe spaces for Gay, lesbian and bisexual folk to enjoy and draw support from.

Homosexuality is not a weekend thing. It is a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year thing. Our community needs your help and if you expect these organizations to continue providing the level of service they do, then get involved. For those of you that do not, if you see me out on a Saturday night at Brixx with my friends, I am out to relax and have fun. That's what the bar is for. I've worked all week and volunteered my time to PTCS and I deserve it. Do you?

I'm bisexual and not allowed to be proud. In Saskatoon's gay community bisexuals are treated like pariahs. I'm sick of it. I'm not a fence sitter, I'm not being trendy-bi, and I'm not a partially closeted homosexual. I'm the first one to admit that I'm not equally attracted to women as men. Nope, I'm not a fifty-fifty kind of guy nor do I need to be in order to be considered bisexual. Not to negate the fact that some men and women are fifty-fifty people; I don't think that there is any percentage that would adequately describe my sexual attraction to men and women. I used to joke that some days I was 30% straight and 70% gay, only to satisfy the community. My sexuality is fluid, and now I'm willing to admit that.

It seems that no one thinks bisexuality exists. It bothers me that both homosexuals and heterosexuals ask me to join their camp. It is as if bisexuals are the rope in some sort of twisted tug-of-war game and both camps have each in their own right won many battles. One of my gay friends mentioned that each camp polarizes the situation: either you're straight or gay. There is no tolerance for a middle ground and I'm caught in between.

It is a myth that because I label myself as bisexual it means that I am unsatisfied with having only one partner. It's not true that all bisexuals want to have a threesome with a man and a woman, just like not all gay men want to have an orgy at the local (or nearest) bathhouse.

Sexual orientation is not a determining factor in a person's ability to commit or be faithful. Bisexuals have gotten the reputation of being unfaithful in relationships based on logic I can't understand. "But I've been hurt by bisexual guys that have cheated on me with women." Sorry, but every bisexual is not your last ex. If all bisexuals


stopped dating people by sexual orientation category according to those that cheat on them, I personally would be left with lesbians. While I may find some lesbians attractive, I've been informed that I'm lacking in several departments, and folding my arms in together for cleavage doesn't count.

It seems that no one thinks bisexuality exists. It bothers me that both homosexuals and heterosexuals ask me to join their camp.

At times I think the solution is to label myself as 'sexual' but that leads to more confusion. What exactly does 'sexual' mean? Then again what does any label mean? Also, the label 'sexual' is becoming as pejorative as trendy-bi.

While the community is always willing to cite the Kinsey scale—10% of us are gay—they forget about the 80% that fall under the bisexual category. If you're gonna quote from a study, don't be so selective or you've become the gay community's version of the Christian right wing.

I thought that coming out would help me further understand my situation, but instead it has complicated things. It appears that it would be so much easier to simply go straight or 'linear' (a term used by some of my gay friends). I don't know how many times I've heard, "Why can't you just choose one?" But to do this would be denying a part of myself, and no way am I putting myself back in the closet.

I question how many closet bisexuals there are—those that have been won over and choose to deny their bisexuality and label themselves as either gay or straight. In a time where labels are meant to be a form of empowerment, bisexuals are told you can't have power in that label, choose another. Well sorry, I didn't come out to win the gay sweepstakes with my label as my ticket. I'm fine with the one I have and don't want to trade it in. 

EDITORIAL

As the old saying goes "We've come a long way baby" and 1997 was certainly a year in which we saw major changes occurring in the climate in which lesbians and gay men live. In 1998 our progress will continue and by the end of the year all provinces and territories, with the exception of the Northwest Territories, may well have provincial legislation protecting us against discrimination.

Issues like spousal benefits are becoming commonplace, although we still seem to have to fight that one workplace by workplace. Immigration issues are slowly being won and the marriage issue may well see advances in the coming year. Numerous religious denominations are slowly making advances towards an understanding of gay people and, in some cases, acceptance of the gays and lesbians in their midst.

With all the gains we have made it appears that there are still major problems. The vast majority of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals are still not at the place where they feel it is safe to come out and be visible. This is especially true for those who live outside the major urban areas. There are still few safe places for queer people outside the cities and even in the cities the majority of gay people are not accessing those safe places that exist. I don't think we can really claim victory when so many people feel they have no choice but to remain hidden in the closet where they are more vulnerable to suicide, substance abuse, mental illness and HIV.

Perhaps 1998 should be the year when we take the freedom we have won in the cities and work with lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in rural areas to help them create environments and safe places where they can fully express their sexuality.

We still have young people growing up in a school system that is homophobic and heterosexist. The situation faced by our youth has changed little. Yes, there are youth groups for them but a small percentage of queer youth are comfortable enough with themselves to access those groups. It's hell being queer in school.

Perhaps 1998 should be the year when we begin approaching school boards and administrations to let them know that they are frequently in violation of human rights legislation. We need to let them know that they are failing miserably in the duty to provide gay and lesbian youth with a safe environment in which to learn and that they have failed to create an environment in which lesbian and gay teachers can be visible.

We've come a long way, but we're not there yet.

EXPRESSIONS ART SHOW

(Calgary) The Calgary Lesbian and Gay Community Services Association (GLCSA), formerly known as Gay Lines Calgary, is hosting the 4th Annual Expressions Art Show April 4, 1998. The exhibit, which features gay and lesbian artists as well as non-gay/lesbian artists, will be held at the Metropolitan Centre, 333 4 Ave. SW at 7pm.

The show has evolved over the years from when it was first held in 1995 at the Alberta Ballet studios and featured only gay artists. The philosophy at the time was given that Gay Lines Calgary, which was an information and peer-counselling service directed primarily at gay and bisexual men, could take an even more pivotal role in promoting local gay culture.

Gay Lines Calgary existed for 12 years as a small, but central, entity within the Calgary gay/lesbian community. The Expressions Art Show was an attempt to not only heighten the Collective's profile, but to raise some desperately needed cash.

When GLCSA was formed after Gay Lines Calgary was dissolved by the incoming 1995 Board of Directors and the previous administration ousted, the exhibit was expanded to include lesbian artists as well in order to better reflect the mandate of the new organization.

In recent years the annual show has expanded to include non-gay/lesbian artists—a move not without controversy in the Calgary community.

A spokeswoman for Expressions addressed the issue of inclusion of non-gay/lesbian artists by pointing out that only approximately one percent of the artists showing were not gay or lesbian. She added that these artists were highly gay/lesbian-affirmative and "thrilled" to be included in a show in a "community known for its discerning art tastes."

Based on the number of applications mailed to date, the current show will feature works by approximately 26 artists. Last year's show had 20 artists showing, including a piece by Andy Warhol.

The Arts Committee would have liked to include pieces of this stature from openly lesbian artists, but very few openly lesbian artists attain such status. While the reasons for this are complex and tied up with the sociological and even political intrigues of the art world, it would seem openly lesbian women involved in the arts generally concentrate more on the arts and crafts aspect, said a GLCSA spokeswoman.

The show now also features bronzes, ceramics, watercolours, and charcoal drawings. The organizers are quick to point out that the exhibit has always concentrated on the fine arts and was never meant to include arts and crafts. All of the art is for sale, with a portion of the proceeds going to GLCSA.

For more information call Cheryl Almen (403) 238-2579 or the Calgary Lesbian & Gay Community Services Association at (403) 234-8973.

QUEERS OF COLOUR

(Winnipeg) Clayton Hayes wants to start a group for queers of colour in Winnipeg. Hayes, a young, gay black man, says that lesbians and gay men who are of colour frequently have difficulty gaining acceptance in Winnipeg's lesbian and gay community.

"The community in Winnipeg is very small, Hayes told *Swerve*, Winnipeg's lesbian and gay paper, "and when I come out to different social settings, I sometimes feel like there's no one I can identify with."

Hayes said he hopes the new group will provide opportunities for people of colour to share common personal experiences, like inter-racial dating and the frustrations of being left out of the larger lesbian and gay community. "Within gay culture the stereotypical pretty boy is blonde-haired and blue-eyed, and that leaves out a lot of people," Hayes added.

Hayes said lesbians and gays of colour also experience discrimination and intolerance from within their own ethnic community. "There's a stereotype that black people

aren't gay," he said. He hopes the group will also help change those stereotypes.

The first meeting of the new group takes place April 29 at the Lesbian and Gay Resource Centre.

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

Please permit me a few words in response to the closure of Café Browse, Saskatoon's lesbian-owned café and bookstore. Like many others in our community, I've been greatly saddened by the new of its passing. I'm going to miss the place, and not just because of the great food and desserts, or the friendly welcome that always awaited me and my friends when we walked in the door. The sense of loss is more than personal; I believe that it has implications for our whole community.

The Café was more than just a place to eat or buy magazines. From the outset, it was an outspokenly queer-friendly space, used as a regular meeting place by community groups ranging from the Bridge City Chorus to the Lesbians-Who-Brunch.

It was a place where queer couples could go without fear of being mistreated. It offered employment to people of all sexual orientations who were looking for a safe and progressive workplace. The Café hosted excellent musical and literary reading evenings, many of which helped to promote the work of lesbian, gay, or other "alternative" artists. In addition, it functioned as an unofficial clearinghouse for information of importance to our community, helping to promote events, groups, and fund-raising efforts such as the AIDS Walk and community dances. Its owner did all this with a sincere desire for our collective well-being, unhampered by the pettiness, partisanship and prejudice that invade so much of our community life.

That leaves me wondering: Why did the clientele eventually transform itself into an overwhelmingly heterosexual one? Where did all those queers go who patronized the Café in its early days? Why did so many customers leave when the owner, a smoker herself, made the Café temporarily non-smoking in response to confusing municipal by-laws? And why did so many fail to return when partial smoking seating was resumed?

Finally, why is our community so complacent when our businesses and other organizations are threatened with extinction? I wish I had the answers. I wish that we had repaid the loyalty and good faith that were extended to us. I wish that the Café could stick around long enough to become a venerable institution, as it deserved to be. Whenever a gay- or lesbian-

owned business disappears, we need to ask each other why. It's certain that, in this case, the closing was not due to poor management—after all, the owner is a knowledgeable and experienced businessperson who has given professional training to other entrepreneurs.

Unfortunately, we queers, as a group, tend to be a fickle bunch, long on criticism and short on praise. For once, let's give some credit where it's due. I, for one, feel deeply grateful to Penny Skilnik

and her staff for their efforts on our behalf. In four all-too-short years they did more for this community than many of us do in a lifetime. Few people can fully appreciate the tremendous work, the innumerable hours, and the enormous personal risk that went into the making of such a venture. Those of us who have had to close businesses will identify with the inevitable feelings of loss and failure that accompany that decision. As a community, we share the loss, but must also acknowledge that the failure was all ours. So let me close by saying one more thing that needs to be said: I'm sorry.

Sincerely,

Marusha Taylor
Saskatoon, SK

*Unfortunately, we
queers, as a group,
tend to be a fickle
bunch.*

PERCEPTIONS welcomes letters from our readers. Letters will not be considered for publication unless they include the name, address, phone number and signature of the writer. We reserve the right to edit any published letter for clarity or brevity.

Sorry but this isn't a review of or commentary on the recent gay movie *In & Out*, although I did find it an enjoyable watch. It's also not about being in and out of the closet, but rather about how we as a community treat other queer people who somehow don't qualify to be in our own "in group."

There was a time when I deluded myself with the notion that we would all support one another because we all shared the common denominator of trying to navigate through an environment that was less than hospitable to us. There was a time in the early days of building a queer community when our numbers were small, so we felt the urgency of working together whether we were lesbian, gay or bisexual, young or old, rich or poor, white or of colour. It seems to me that those days are long gone. As our community has burgeoned with an influx of people coming out, we seem to have drifted into our own little sub-groups and seldom do we see any connection with someone in that group at the other side of the bar or the other side of town.

The idea that we are all in this together, which prevailed 25 years ago, has devolved into an attitude of "how is their pain, or joy, pertinent to me?" Because they don't have the same fashion sense, or they're too out or too in, they're too old or too young, or they don't belong to the right ethnic group are factors that frequently seem to determine who we see as part of our community. The fact that we're all in the same boat of living in an environment that is permeated by homophobia doesn't seem to carry much weight any longer.

If one looks around the visible queer community, one predominantly sees white and middle-class faces. That doesn't mean only white, middle-class people are queer. More importantly, it means that those who don't fit the middle-class white model often don't feel comfortable coming out and participating in the organized queer community.

I certainly don't believe it's necessary for us all to party together all the time as we do have a diverse range of interests. However, I think it's important for us to treat one another with respect and to aid one another in navigating the tricky waters of trying to attain our hopes and dreams and reach a place where we feel good about who we are.

All too often it's the sexy, middle-class issues like spousal rights that get attention in our community and get people off their butts to take some action. Unfortunately, it's usually only professionals who are in a position to access benefit plans. Most people don't feel comfortable enough about being queer to ask for what is rightfully theirs.

There are many issues that queers face that don't receive much support in our community. Many of those who share "the love that dares not speak its name" face issues like poverty, homelessness and unemployment. Frequently these issues are an outcome of being queer and trying to cope with those feelings in what they see as a hostile environment. If you share the multiple issues of being marginalized because you're queer and of colour, queer and a woman, or queer with a visible disability, you're not likely to obtain much understanding from the majority of people in the visible queer community. It's

usually more important what you look like or how you dress than the human struggle you're going through to find your place in the sun.

The upcoming AIDS Walk in Saskatoon will see, at most, 200 people participating and probably half of those people won't be queer. Those 100 gay people participating certainly doesn't reflect the number of queers living in Saskatoon. The situation isn't any different in any other city which is hosting a walk to raise funds to fight the effects of HIV and AIDS. Now that HIV and AIDS have moved into other populations and the media is focused on those groups, many have decided AIDS is no longer urgent in the queer community so they turn their attention elsewhere. Unfortunately, gay people are still being infected with HIV because of the issues of marginalization they face.

I was having supper with a friend the other night and we were pondering why so few queer people see the need to support organizations like Gay & Lesbian Health Services or AIDS Saskatoon. I suspect that the amount of money donated to charitable causes in Saskatoon by queers is rather huge, yet only a minuscule amount of that charitable giving ends up in a queer or AIDS organization. One reason we agreed on was that most people don't see the work GLHS does, or any of the other queer community organizations, as having any connection to their lives. Those groups just work with troubled youth and adults and if people are out and have found a comfortable niche they tend to forget their own experiences in coming to grips with their feelings. If a queer organization doesn't meet the direct needs of me and my group then I needn't be concerned or involved.

Perhaps my youth spent in the Baptist church has led me to believe that we're all in this together. We're all connected through our pain and our joy. I also suspect coming out in the 1960s, when the community was small, has given me an appreciation of the need for community and connectedness. My coming out was shaped by a diverse group of people who all provided me with some insight into the diverse experiences we share in learning to survive and thrive in a homophobic world.

Working at GLHS has also provided me with insight into the diverse backgrounds and needs of people in my community. I have the opportunity to meet men and women who come from all socio-economic groups. Even though they have incredibly diverse experiences, they all share one common factor: The need to find ways to achieve inner peace and attain some sense of self-esteem around being queer. It has provided me with a better understanding of how our feelings of pain and joy are the same, regardless of the experiences that have brought about those feelings.

We all need to broaden our horizons and realize that we are more similar than we are different. We all need to see beyond our own comfortable circles and recognize that other queer people are part of our community; we need their support and they need ours. We don't have to always like one another to do that. We just need to recognize our common humanity as we all journey through life, trying to bring our hopes and dreams to life. *[2]*

Last year around this time I was preparing for the first Miss Diva's Queen of Hearts pageant. For several reasons I thought participating in this event, for not only me but two of my close friends, would be a good opportunity for us to try our hand at drag performing. Considering our lack of experience I was shocked that by the end of the evening I was crowned Miss Diva. After the initial shock my response was, "Now what do I do?!" Despite my lack of experience I knew I wanted certain things to change in Saskatoon with regard to drag and up until now my efforts have focused on those goals.

Like most people, I had a preconceived notion about drag queens. However, I learned quickly that drag queens are often caught in the crossfire of misconceptions and political agendas. Several times last year, people were arguing around me about drag queens without the parties involved taking the time to ask for my input or feelings regarding that issue. When the debris settled, that was when I was able to speak but the best I could do was damage control. In order for this to change drag queens in Saskatoon would have to change people's focus from their past experiences with other drag queens to the present group of performers.

Dialogue between drag queens and members of the lesbian community was an important step in effecting change. Many lesbians viewed drag queens as mocking femininity and all that is woman. Some thought we were perpetuating archaic and often outlandish images of womanhood, that drag queens assist in the continued oppression of women through their satirical performances. However, through interpersonal dialogue I believe we were able to increase the attendance, support and participation of the lesbian community over this past year of the drag shows.

The reasons why men become drag queens are diverse and I cannot pretend that they are all noble. However, not all drag queens are anti-women using their drag performances to express their political agenda. For myself, I just like performing in front of an audience. I enjoy taking a song and making it my own through my visual interpretation of it. I believe my performances do have a satirical component to them. But I'm satirizing gender roles, not femininity and women. Why would I satirize a group of people that have helped to shape my life into a positive force. If I, as a man with a broad body structure, could don all the feminine trappings of an "ultra feminine" woman and still look feminine, then maybe feminine qualities should not be seen as strictly belonging to women. To me, drag queens and drag kings prove that gender roles and identities are socially constructed.

As each drag show occurred the amount of women coming out to support us increased significantly. This was encouraging for us because it showed our networking and dialoguing had been paying off. Now we also had an opportunity to get feedback from the lesbian

community on our shows and possible areas of improvement. Eventually women started contributing both backstage and as performers, resulting in even more attendance by the lesbian community. My hope is that next year we will have enough women to run the Mr. Diva's pageant and a significantly higher representation of women in the drag shows.

The reasons why men become drag queens are diverse and I cannot pretend that they are all noble.

One of the reasons I took so long before I decided to perform as a drag queen was the negative reputation drag queens had within my community. I heard many horror stories about bitchy, overbearing, catty, ultra-competitive men with inflated egos who dress in women's clothing and expect everyone to wor-

ship them. Though I believe that some of those elements in moderation contribute to our ability as a drag queen to entertain, I also think one should always be respectful of others. I envisioned drag queens as a cohesive group not trying to out-do each other. Each drag queen contributes to the success or failure of the show. Drag shows are about the total package, not the individual performances. That is why we encouraged attendance of practice and feedback sessions for all the performers. Without the move towards this group mentality our theme show would have lacked continuity and our group numbers would of lack the elements that made them the highlights of the show. Our cohesiveness as a group fostered our talent as individuals.

Though drag queens in Saskatoon have made a lot of progress in changing how gays and lesbians view us, there are still several areas where more work needs to be done. The area we have made the least gains in is regards to beauty standards. Even though we had representation from every body type, from stereotypically beautiful to full-figured voluptuousness, it was not surprising the type of feedback we would receive from the audience. The drag queens who looked "stereotypically beautiful" were, for the most part, recognized for their appearance. The drag queens who looked "full-figured" were recognized for their talent. Not that the "stereotypical" queens lacked talent and the "full-figured" queens lacked beauty, but without recognition of all aspects of ourselves we all seemed to have bouts of self-defeating behaviour. As a drag queen recognized for her talents I was uncomfortable being in drag after the performance. Yet my sister, Roxy, seemed to blossom after the show was over because she felt her appearance was what people appreciated most. Though we have noticed changes in how people complement us, I am glad I have my sisters to keep me from becoming too critical of my "drag queenness."


Another area I would like to see growth in is how gay men view drag queens. For some reason gay men are very entertained by us and want us around to party with. But they have difficulty dealing with the fact that they might be attracted to one of us. They seem to feel that gay men cannot be attracted to femininity because their sexual orientation might be called into question. Throughout this past year several

(please see "QUEEN" on page 9)

QUEEN... *(continued from page 6)*

drag queens got the “I would date you if you were not a drag queen” speech. Though our initial response may have been “Thanks for weeding yourself out, asshole,” sometimes we wonder if it is worth being a drag queen if I cannot get what I really want—a man.

Several reasons have been given to us for their inability to act on their feelings. Some gay men do not want to explain why they are dating a drag queen to their family and friends. Others think that we are suffering from gender identity problems. They see femininity as women and masculinity as men. In many ways they see being a drag queen as a lifestyle. That is why, for many reasons, I see myself as a female impersonator, actor or performance artist. Performing in drag is my culturally relevant artistic outlet. Being a drag queen does not make my life complete. Crystal Clear is the character I play on stage. The stage just happens to be the local gay bar. I think that is another reason why I am more comfortable in drag when I am performing because I have a purpose for doing drag. I view gay men who want me to stop doing drag so they can date me as lacking sensitivity because they are trying to make me choose between my artistic expression and having a relationship.

When I became Miss Diva last February I promised myself a year to explore doing drag. Now that my year is almost up I am not sure if I will retire or continue to contribute to the local drag community. Despite some frustration and stress, drag has been a very positive experience for me. My self-confidence has increased dramatically and I am more willing to accept myself as I am. I have a greater desire to explore other aspects of myself. I do not feel an overwhelming need to label myself as a feminine gay man any more. I have an artistic talent that is appreciated by many people. And there are too many songs I still want to perform! Whatever my role may take in the years to come, I would like to thank everyone who made this year a wonderful growing experience. 

At a workshop on violence in same-sex relationships, the assembled participants (some self-identified "les-bi-gays," some representing "stakeholder" agencies such as women's shelters) were asked: "What is the role of the community in dealing with same-sex abuse?" The meaning of the word "community" in this context seemed clear to me, but apparently it did not mean the same thing to everyone present. One woman in my small discussion group said that she thought "community" referred to people living in the same city neighbourhood. This heterosexual white woman did not seem aware that anyone could live in any other kind of "community," and therefore much of the discussion seemed to take place over her head.

My reaction to such stunning ignorance (as I saw it) caused me to consider who, or what, is a "community." Since Stonewall, and probably before then, those who are "sex variant" (to use a quaint term apparently coined by literary critic Jeanette Foster in the 1950s) have been referring to "our community" as though we all know what this means. However, changing definitions of who "we" are suggest that a community has different boundaries depending on how it is labelled.

In the early 1980s, as I recall, the "community" I entered when I "came out" was called "gay." Most of the men I met at that time seemed to assume that this word applied to men and women equally, even if "gay women" were not actually represented in the leadership of "gay" organizations or in collections of "gay" literature. When pressed to explain the scarcity of women in much "gay community" space, several men offered me the explanation that there have never been as many lesbians as gay men. If we weren't visible, according to this theory, it was because we were as rare as hen's teeth. Strangely enough, I met and heard of plenty of lesbians once I was acquainted with a few who had lovers, ex-es and friends, and once lesbian organizations within the "gay" community began creating women-only social space. By now it seems to be an established practice to add "lesbian" to the word "gay," thereby implying that "gay" always does and always did apply only to males. So did the concept of a "gay community" ever really include women? Good question.

The inclusion, or exclusion, of bisexuals in "our" community is possibly an even livelier can of worms. I suspect that most people have had (or will have) some sexual contact with, or at least fantasies about, members of both biological genders during a lifetime (assuming there are two basic models, which is a questionable assumption in itself). So does this mean that most of us are "bisexual," in some sense? If so, does the word mean anything more specific than "human"? Lingering bias against self-defined "bisexuals" in "our" community seems to be at least somewhat based on the untrustworthiness of the word itself, and the wide variety of people and experiences that could be defined this way.

When "bisexuals" are excluded as "politically incorrect," however, the result is the kind of enforced conformity that drove most of us out of "straight" society in the first place.

"Transgendered" people have recently been recognized as a distinct group within the "les-bi-gay" (or "queer," although some people hate this word) community. Within this group (even if it is small in numbers), there can be vast differences. A male-to-female is obviously not the same as a female-to-male. If a male-to-female (such as Sandy Stone, who became the centre of a furore in the 1980s when he/she was working for Olivia Records, which had a women-only employment policy) prefers sexual

relationships with women, is "she" a "lesbian," or (as some angry women claimed) is "he" still a "man" who figured out a drastic and devious way to infiltrate lesbian-only space? If a female-to-male (such as author Leslie Feinberg) forms a relationship with a woman (in this case, "lesbian" author Minnie Bruce Pratt), does this mean the

woman must then be considered "straight"?

*To preserve what is left of
my sanity, I accept
whatever labels people
apply to themselves.*

To preserve what is left of my sanity, I accept whatever labels people apply to themselves. You say you're a bisexual drag performer with a taste for plump people from Timbuktu? Fine. Since you "came out" as a "gay" person, have you "come out" further as a Two-Spirited member of a First Nations community, a lesbian separatist, a butch, a femme, a queen, a sub or a dom(me)? Glad to meetcha. Interestingly enough, I think the diversity of identities that have sprung up in "alternative" (non-straight) communities has increased my willingness to judge people on a one-to-one basis, as I was taught to do in the much simpler time of my childhood. Any other approach just seems too mind-boggling, and my brain is mush.

Unfortunately, the backlash response that we should all reject "labels" in general just doesn't work. Really rejecting labels would mean refusing to define ourselves as different from married heterosexuals with conservative views. We would then be left with no "community" except the people next door, who might or might not have anything in common with us besides physical space. We are still too vulnerable to violence, either one-on-one, or collectively aimed at us by the homophobic right wing, not to identify our fellow targets and potential allies.

In Regina, complaints have been made in the past that "too many" heterosexuals (often university students) go to the gay bar, or "community centre." Now that this centre occupies a new, downtown location, the general flavour of the clientele will probably be somewhat different, since the crowd always changes somewhat when the bar relocates. In any case, I have often wondered how many heterosexuals it takes to reach a critical mass that should alarm the "legitimate" community members, and whether

anyone under age 25 (especially someone who likes to hang out in social space that is associated with "queerness") can really be considered "straight" for all time.

Lack of time and space prevents me from exploring these ideas at much greater length; consider yourself lucky. Suffice it to say that if it is hard to reach consensus on who is a real queer person, it is even harder to agree on who should "represent" the "community" to any branch of government or the "straight" mainstream. "Spokespeople," like community members at large, generally seem to volunteer for the job. This situation sometimes leads to the question: "Who elected you?" (as in "Who died, and appointed you God?") Questions like this, of course, often have sarcastic answers. Even when the answer is serious ("I was elected Public Spokesperson by the ten people who showed up for the AGM"), there are still questions about who "really" represents "the community" and how responsible representation can be established.

Opinions on this topic can be addressed to *PERCEPTIONS*. **P**

RODEO A SUCCESS

(Calgary) Organizers for this year's Canadian Rockies International Rodeo are pleased and excited with the turnout for the event which is fast becoming a major lesbian and gay tourist attraction. This year spectators from as far away as France, Germany and New York flew to Calgary to participate in the weekend of festivities.

"We're all really happy with the success of this year's rodeo," said Rodeo Director Judy Munson "and the numbers were really up over the previous year." This was the third year for Munson serving as rodeo director and she says she enjoys her job of helping stage the exciting event.

Mother nature wouldn't cooperate for this year's rodeo with rain a constant participant in the games. However, the rain failed to keep competitors or spectators away and some people even suggested that they wanted the rodeo arena watered down next year as the mud bowl proved to add challenge to the competitions. Munson said the rain certainly didn't keep anyone away. One judge commented that he couldn't believe the fan support

with the fans still coming out to watch the various events.

Munson estimates that 3,500 to 4,000 people took in the various events at the rodeo. Weekend package sales were up by 200 this year as were tickets for the dinner. Over 650 people attended the Julian Austin concert with another 150 to 200 showing up for the dance afterwards. Over 500 people showed up for the closing awards ceremony, something Munson says is unheard of at these events.

Calgary's gay and lesbian rodeo is part of a circuit of rodeos in North America, although it is the only one outside of the United States. The International Gay Rodeo Association (IGRA), which is situated in Denver, has 40 chapters in 20 states in the U.S and regulates the various gay rodeos around North America. It sets standards that govern the nature of events staged, the size and treatment of animals and the certification of judges.

The rodeo is staged by the Alberta Rockies Gay Rodeo Association (ARGRA) which is attracting more and more members from across Canada and the United States. Members receive discounts on rodeo

passes as well as a newsletter to keep them informed. Munson said many people are becoming members to volunteer at the various rodeo events. Memberships are \$20 a year and can be obtained from ARGRA by writing them at Box 23064, Connaught PO, Calgary, AB T2S 3B1 or by e-mailing them at aga@unikom

The organization will hold their Annual General meeting on September 13 where the new board will be elected. After that election Munson says the board will begin the work of planning next year's rodeo.

SINGING IN MANITOBA

(Winnipeg) Manitoba's capital has joined the growing list of prairie cities with lesbian and gay choruses. Last winter, Jeff Staflund began organizing meetings for those interested in being part of a queer chorus and after promoting the venture at Pride events and local gay venues a small core group has formed.

The group has decided that the chorus will be a community chorus rather than a competitive one which would require all members to audition. The group chose a community choir because they wanted to place the emphasis on providing a social outlet and dialogue between men and women.

"Despite what you might expect, a community choir is more of a challenge," says Staflund, adding that lesbians and gays have different perspectives on life. "I know that most choirs encounter that. We're not going to avoid friction but we want to work it out," he added.

Staflund has been joined by others who are helping to organize things. Marian Hijkoop has joined the organizing team and said, "Now that we have a gay mayor, we should have a gay choir."

The new chorus is also getting help from choruses across the prairies. Choruses in both Saskatoon and Regina have agreed to travel to Winnipeg next May for a joint fund-raising concert. They have also agreed to assist by loaning music and providing advice.

Staflund, who recently moved from Regina, was a member of that city's Prairie Pride Chorus as well as its accompanist. "It was a fun experience and a way to meet people, both from within the city and from outside," he said.

Approximately 50 people have expressed interest in the new chorus so far. Work is taking place to secure practice facilities as well as a director and accompanist. Anyone interested in being part of Winnipeg's new queer choir can call Marian at 896-7869 or Jeff at 237-9743.

(Saskatoon) The Bridge City Chorus, Saskatoon's Gay and Lesbian Chorus, was born in August 1991 and continues to be a source of gay pride for both the city of Saskatoon and the province of Saskatchewan. Over breakfast on a Saturday morning at the Broadway Cafe, would-be songsters Ron Knoll, Bruce Garman, and Ralph Wushke met to lay the foundation for what has become a social and cultural mainstay for the local gay scene. Ralph, a longtime gay activist, Lutheran pastor, and choral enthusiast, was instrumental in establishing the Ottawa Gay Men's Chorus and was seeking like-minded individuals in his new home of Saskatoon. Ron, well known in musical circles, agreed to be the accompanist and Bruce offered a basement in which they could practise. Along with the help of director David Carlin they soon found themselves practising in St. John's Cathedral and planning for their first concert.

Originally made up of a small, enthusiastic group of local gay men, the Bridge City Chorus has grown over the years, both in numbers as well as diversity. Several years after its inception, the group welcomed women into the fold, and has since voted to also include bisexuals. It is this diversity and representation from all of Saskatoon's queer community that has made it a favourite of gay and straight audiences alike. The annual February concert is a hot ticket on the Saskatoon gay social circuit and has featured other gay and lesbian choruses such as the Edmonton Vocal Minority, Calgary Rocky Mountain Singers, and Regina's Prairie Pride.

As a safe, healthy, and supportive environment, the Bridge City Chorus has fostered the talent of its many members, some of which have gone on to sing in other choral groups throughout the city and country. As this year's president, Darryl Wilkie, says; "The whole point of the chorus is to provide a positive, fulfilling experience for local gays, lesbians, and bisexuals that is facilitated through song and camaraderie rather than in the bar (not that I don't love it there too!). The choir was an integral part of my coming out and allowed me to meet and make

lasting friendships with some really great people in the local community."

One of the mandates of the chorus has been to assist other gay and lesbian choirs get started, so when Bridge City Chorus member James McNinch moved to Regina in 1996, the chorus was there to assist. James began organizing what would become "Prairie Pride" and enlisted his fellow singers in the Bridge City Chorus to perform a concert to stir up some interest in the Regina community. The chorus performance in Regina succeeded in establishing that community's choir and they have since performed several times together. Most recently, members of the gay and lesbian community in Winnipeg, headed up by Saskatchewan musician and composer Jeff Staflund, have sought help and guidance from the Bridge City Chorus in establishing that city's first gay and lesbian chorus. The Winnipeg chorus has invited the Bridge City Chorus to perform with them in the new year and a fund-raising dance on November 20th at the Ukrainian Hall has been planned to raise funds for the trip to Winnipeg.

The Bridge City Chorus practises weekly on Monday nights (7:30 pm) at St. Thomas Wesley United Church and is always in search of new members regardless of their ability. Practices start in late September and run through to May.

EDITORIAL

It's that time of year again when most community groups are making an appeal for donations and United Way campaigns are underway in all the major cities. It's also the time of year that many queer organizations are out looking for donations to keep their vital organizations open and able to meet the demands of those in need in our community.

Raising money for queer organizations is not an easy task. I'm not aware of any gay or lesbian group that is a member agency of the United Way, although a few United Ways will allow donors to direct their donation to a gay/lesbian organization. Getting into bingo halls is difficult as most halls are not welcoming of queer groups. Even some AIDS organizations have to camouflage their identity to raise funds through bingos.

Many organizations in our communities raise money by trotting out a baby or child in their fundraising appeals. In the fundraising field it's well known that using children to raise money is highly successful. That's not an option for queer organizations. While children may well be lesbian, gay or bisexual, their sexuality and sexual orientation are usually not a big part of their identity. By the time they hit puberty and become clear about orientation they are past the cute and cuddly phase.

Service clubs, who raise substantial dollars for community work, are usually not receptive to appeals from the lesbian and gay community. If anyone knows of a queer positive service club please let me know.

The avenues for raising money for gay and lesbian community groups are few and far between. For that reason most must rely on donations made by people in the gay and lesbian community and our supporters in the broader community. Unfortunately, studies indicate that the gay and lesbian community has a lower rate of making donations to community initiatives than the non-gay community. Sad, but true.

This year, when a United Way canvasser comes calling for a donation, ask them if you can direct your donation to a queer group in your community. If they won't allow that then inform them you will be making your donation to that group directly. When an appeal comes from a local gay and lesbian organization, consider how your donation will help make your community a better place to live, even if you don't directly access services from that community.

The incredible progress we've made over the past 30 years in increasing our rights and lessening homophobia in our communities has come about because a small group of queers has toiled to bring about those changes and a small group of people has supplied the donations to keep organizations open and functioning. See it as a Christmas gift to yourself.

PS: Our apologies to Peter Millard for not crediting him for his excellent article in the last issue on the Hugh Owens/Saskatoon Star-Phoenix human rights inquiry.

October 27, 1999

3

SUPER SPORTS WEEKEND

(Edmonton) For the past eight years the Titans bowling league has sponsored the Northern Titans Ice Breaker Tournament to bring bowlers together from across the West. This year the tournament will be greatly expanded with the addition of curling, volley ball and badminton in what is being billed as a super sports weekend.

Sporting events will occur during the weekend of November 12 to 14 along with a number of social activities. A registration party will occur on Friday, Nov. 12 at Buddy's Pub. The various sporting competitions will take place Saturday at numerous venues around to city, followed

up by the Ice Breaker Dance. On Sunday the sporting activities will continue from 11:00am to 3:00pm followed by an Awards Banquet. For those still raring to go, The Survivors Party will take place the Roost.

The Ramada/Edmonton Inn has been chosen as the host hotel with a special rate for Ice Breaker participants or spectators. Bookings can be arranged by calling (780) 454-5454.

Additional information on the weekend of sports and parties can be obtained by calling (780) 454-8609.

EDITORIAL

An era has come to an end for Saskatoon's lesbian and gay community. For most of the past two decades numerous organizations in the queer community have rented the Ukrainian National Federation Hall on 20th Street and Avenue G to host their dances and social functions. It's been the site of numerous fundraising dances, pride events and concerts with the Bridge City Chorus. On December 4 the last queer function, a Christmas Dance sponsored by Gay & Lesbian Health Services, was held at the hall.

The Ukrainian Hall has been up for sale for some time and a buyer has finally been found. After this year ends it will no longer be available for community groups to rent. The hall has been bought by a fundamentalist religious group, the only ones who seem to have money to purchase buildings these days, and they are not interested in renting to queer organizations.

Over the past two decades the Ukrainian association always welcomed the queer community and have made renting the hall a pleasant experience. I am going to miss the dances in the hall with busts of dead Ukrainians watching from the side walls. It has been an important part of queer history in Saskatoon.

Gay & Lesbian Health Services has secured a new location for dances in the coming year. The Crystal Ballroom has been re-opened in the basement of the same building GLHS inhabits along with Diva's club. In the 1920's the Crystal Ballroom was the premiere dance club in Saskatoon and the new owners have spent large amounts of money rebuilding the facility that has had many uses over the past decades.

Christmas and the time of good cheer is rapidly approaching but unfortunately for many people in our community the holiday season isn't a happy one. With the emphasis on shopping and family get-togethers many feel left out. Those with low incomes find it difficult to meet the expectations of spending madly on gifts, food and booze. Those who are estranged from their families often find themselves left out of the celebrations. For many people the Christmas season can be a most depressing time.

We need to watch for those in our communities who are having difficulties during this season and include them in our plans. They need to know that someone is thinking about them. If you're having a crowd over for Christmas check around and see if there are those who will be alone while the rest of the world is celebrating with family and friends. Invite them to spend the day with you and your family. That would be the true spirit of Christmas.

From all the volunteers at Perceptions: Have a very merry and gay holiday season and we'll see you all again next millennium.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

(Calgary) The Metropolitan Community Church of Calgary (MCC), will be hosting its annual Christmas Eve service on December 24 at the Bankview Community Centre. The new location, home of the growing MCC congregation, will make this a memorable occasion for the community.

The organizing committee for this special service has solicited the support and input of the many businesses and organizations in Calgary's GLBT community, and the response has been enthusiastic. Following on the strength of last year's service which drew a larger than expected crowd, the community has been eager to help out. Sponsors have come forward to assist with everything from publicity to the catered reception which follows the service at midnight. Interest has also been expressed by members of Calgary's two gay or lesbian choirs to form a group to sing at the service.

While the mandate of MCC is principally to minister to the needs of the gay community, this Christmas Eve service is for everyone: gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, transsexual, single, coupled, parents, children and families. "Children, and the parents of gay and lesbian people are

always especially warmly welcomed," says Michael Nicholas, pastor of the Calgary church. "For many people, the highlight of last year's service was the presence of parents who wanted to share this special event with their gay or lesbian child."

Carol singing begins at 10:30pm and the service commences at 11:00pm, followed by a catered reception at midnight. Bankview Community Centre is easily reached by bus #6 from downtown. The Centre is fully wheelchair accessible and the service will be interpreted for the hearing impaired.

QUEER CITY CINEMA 2000

(Regina) Garry Varro, Artistic Director/Curator of Regina's gay/lesbian "queer" film festival, held every two years, feels it is unfortunate that conservative protests distracted public attention away from the themes of this year's festival. Queer City Cinema, held May 8-13, was on the loosely related themes of "community" and "porn," and it concluded with a panel discussion on those topics. In the introduction of the festival program, Garry Varro claims, "Queer City Cinema will screen works that focus on exploration, examination, diversity, and contradiction, and that preserve the notion of 'difference' as an essential and defining characteristic of queer artistic vision."

Regina's "queer" film festival has consistently featured work which has a different flavor from "mainstream" film and television material. Much of it is experimental, and some seems intended to be disturbing. The films, as the artistic expression of individuals, do not even try to capture the elusive will of a community in the same way that more clearly political projects aim to do.

In past years, the les/bi/gay/trans community of Regina has had divided opinions about the meaning and quality of particular films in the festival. This year, however, the festival was criticized in the Saskatchewan legislature before it began, and the criticism gave rise to public controversy.

In April, Saskatchewan Party MLAs June Draude and Arlene Jule objected to the use of "public money" to sponsor "pornography." Queer City Cinema received funding from the Canada Council, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, the City of Regina and several agencies including SaskTel and SaskFilm. June Draude claimed that "pornography" was the issue, not homosexuality, and denied being homophobic. "They have a group of porn actors coming," she said, referring to the panel presenters who included actor Jeff

Blythe from Los Angeles, director/producers Anne Golden and Emily West from Montreal, Dana Inkster and Roy Mitchell from Toronto, Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew from Winnipeg and moderator Caroline Ames of Regina.

"They'll have porno information and they'll be holding a screening right in the [Regina Public] library, right beside the children's library," Draude went on. The

"They'll have porno information... right beside the children's library."

**-June Draude
Saskatchewan Party MLA**

information provided by the panelists had to do with filmmaking and with concepts of community and of sexuality, but the panel discussion could hardly have been considered "pornographic" in the sense of being sexually arousing.

Regarding the screenings, all the films in the festival were given an exemption from the usual screening process by which the Film Classification Board of British Columbia classifies films to be shown in Saskatchewan. The films shown in the festival were approved for adult viewers. No children were seen wandering into the rooms where the evening showings took place.

Most of the films in the six-day festival were relatively short and were shown in two sets per evening. Many were from the United States, many were Canadian, some came from other Commonwealth countries and some were from Europe. Some were sexually explicit, but most were not. Some had traditional plots, while some were more suggestive and non-linear.

When June Draude claimed that Queer City Cinema was unworthy of a Saskatchewan Arts Board grant, she referred to the Christopher Lefler case as a precedent. In 1994, the arts board withdrew a \$9,500 grant from Lefler, a Saskatoon artist, after he displayed a work which identified a Saskatchewan government official as a lesbian. The grant was withdrawn at the request of the Saskatchewan government. Carol Carson, then the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Arts Board, made the request a few days after she vowed in the legislature not to interfere with arts board decisions. Regarding Queer City Cinema 2000, Property Management Minister Doreen Hamilton, substituting for minister Clay Serby, responded to June Draude's comments by saying, "It's up to the arts board, and an independent adjudication process, to sponsor these events."

On the opening night of the festival, a handful of protesters appeared in front of the Regina Public Library carrying signs with such slogans as: "Gay Activists Expect Taxpayers to Fund Their Porn Addiction." A former Toronto man who founded a group he calls the Christian Truth Activists seemed to be an organizer of the protest. Protesters with the same signs appeared in front of the library again on the last day of the festival, just before the panel discussion took place inside. None of the protesters took part in the discussion, which proceeded peacefully.

Among supporters of the festival and its funding were Bob Hughes of the Saskatchewan Coalition Against Racism, who compared the bias of the Saskatchewan Party MLAs to bigotry in other forms, and Felipe Diaz (son-in-law of mystery writer Gail Bowen), who wrote in a letter to the Regina *Leader-Post*: "I think that Draude has failed to appreciate that Queer City Cinema, its funders and even art itself, is not endorsing pornography, but

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

rather a mature discussion on pornography and sexuality in our society. In this case, it isn't as 'black and white' as Draude would like it to be." Several members of Regina's Lesbian and Gay Pride Week Committee also made comments in the media in support of the film festival.

Soon after the festival ended, it was made public that June Draude's husband Martin had pleaded guilty to a single charge of fraud for writing and cashing worthless cheques between the couple's personal bank accounts and accounts belonging to two companies in which they had part ownership. The fraudulent cheques amounted to \$510,100, which was much more than Queer City Cinema or Christopher Lefler ever received from the Saskatchewan government. Ironic, is it not?

QUEER CITY CINEMA

(Saskatoon) Queer City Cinema is at it again... turning the lights down on the Prairies and turning audiences on to intelligent, sexy and serious independent Canadian films and videos. With three highly successful events under their belts—having taken place in Regina since 1996—Queer City Cinema will embark on its first tour to provide the queer and film/video communities of Winnipeg and Saskatoon with an exhibition of diverse and cross representational work.

When Queer City Cinema opened in Regina last May, the Saskatchewan Party raised a ruckus over provincial Arts Board funding for what they labelled pornography. "They'll have porno information and they'll be holding a screening right in the [Regina Public] library, right beside the children's library," said Saskatchewan Party MLA June Draude. Draude went on to claim the issue was pornography, not homosexuality. The NDP stood behind the funding, saying it was approved by an arms-length funding body.

A small group of religious extremists, calling themselves Christian Truth Activists, picketed the opening and were met by a counter demonstration of supporters of the festival.

So, there's no need to travel to the Big City to see the best that Canadian queer film and video makers have to offer. Queer City Cinema has done a little shopping over these past few years and has brought it all back to your very own backyard.

Forty-five short films and videos will comprise the tour. Included will be works by Bruce LaBruce, Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, Nikki Forrest, Daniel McIvor, Ho Tam, Scott Beveridge, Anne Golden, Dana Inkster, Roy Mitchell, Nelson Hendricks, Thirza Cuthand, Paul Lee, Maureen Bradley, Wrik Mead, Sean Kaminsky, as well as works by many other talented and emerging Canadian film and video artists.

All Queer, All Canadian, All Night Long, 2001 Tour invites you to sit back, enjoy the ride, the view and, over the three-day festival, asks you to take a good look. Maybe you'll see yourself and others in

ways you could only have imagined.

Queer City Cinema is the largest and oldest ongoing lesbian and gay film and video festival between British Columbia and Ontario. Since 1996, Queer City Cinema has curated a biannual lesbian and gay film and video festival which programs works by independent queer artists that are conceptual, playful, innovative and provocative and which ultimately propose the idea that identity is not fixed but fluid, multiple and contradictory.

Queer City Cinema seeks to preserve "difference" as an essential and defining characteristic of queer artistic vision and sensibility, and endeavours to insure that a broad spectrum of queer voices and expressions are represented and are given the place to be "viewed" and discussed. Consequently, the programmed films and videos in Queer City Cinema provide audiences with a rethink of such issues as gender, race, sexuality, community/communities, pornography, individual and collective experience, queer politics and theory, and the formal methods through which film and video artists convey idea, memory and experience.

The All Queer, All Canadian, All Night Long, 2001 Tour gay and lesbian film and video festival will open in Saskatoon on Thursday, February 8th and run to Saturday February 10th. It is being presented in Saskatoon by Video Vérité. Screenings will take place at the Mendel Art Gallery, lower level auditorium, 950 Spadina Crescent E.

Additional information can be obtained by calling 306-652-5502 or e-mailing videoverite@sk.sympatico.ca.

The festival opens in Winnipeg on Thursday, February 15th and runs to Saturday, February 17th. It will be presented in Winnipeg by Video Pool with screenings at Winnipeg Film Group—Cinematheque, 100 Arthur St. (Arthur & Bannatyne) in the Artspace Building. For more information call 204-949-9134, ext. 26 or e-mail vpdist@videopool.mb.ca.

All screenings are at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. Admission is \$4 for a single screening and \$6 for the double bill. A Festival Pass for all three evenings is available for \$15. Tickets and Passes available at the door.

Queer City Cinema Inc. and Queer City Cinema 2002 can be contacted by writing 2236 Osler Street, Regina, SK S4P 1W8, phoning 306-757-6637, faxing at 306-757-6632, or by e-mail at queercitycinema@sk.sympatico.ca.

Funding for this Queer City Cinema tour has come from the Canada Council for the Arts—media arts section, with sponsorship from Cruiseline, and presentation assistance from Video Pool, Video Vérité and the Mendel Art Gallery.



BEGINNINGS

(Winnipeg) Saturday, May 20 was the first concert of Western Canada's newest gay/lesbian/bisexual community choir, Winnipeg's Rainbow Harmony Project. Winnipeg is the last major centre in this part of the country, maybe even the continent, to have such an institution. They called this concert, appropriately, Beginnings.

And what a beginning! The concert was a non-stop spectacle and celebration of talent, pride and joy. The Rainbow Harmony Project were first on the risers with a stirring anthem titled "We Are Everywhere." If the nearly 60 voices wasn't sufficient to impress the 1000 expectant patrons filling posh Walker Theatre, then the bass guitar and drum-set made sure the joint was jumpin'. Six more numbers followed, each one entirely different from the other, giving a diverse program of sacred, inspirational, maritime folk, prairie contemporary and Broadway music that kept the audience delightedly surprised and so appreciative they brought the roof down as their newfound darlings left the stage. In keeping with the diverse and joyful music, the two

co-hosts, one of each gender, were fun and entertaining, resisting the temptation to treat the occasion, significant though it was, like it was the landing of the mother-ship.

Regina's Prairie Pride did a fine job of following that act. The 22 predominantly female voices had the audience running the gamut of emotions from melancholy to hilarity with two medleys of Broadway tunes by Stephen Sondheim.

After intermission Saskatoon's Bridge City Chorus' 17 souls kept the crowd entertained enough to give BCC a standing ovation, even though they didn't have the volume to blow the house away. That came next when the stage filled with nearly one hundred singers, a piano player, bass guitarist, drummer, trombone player and assorted noise makers. First, spirits were lifted by "Hand In Hand," then the oompah-pah of "Gender Polka" got the crowd clapping and laughing until their sides hurt. A number composed for last year's international gathering of choruses had the house rockin' big time and made them cheer for more. At the end of almost two all-too-short hours, the combined choir sent their fans home with an anthem of pride and determination, "Never Turning Back".

What a beginning! But it was also the end product of a sequence of beginnings going back some years. Winnipeg is quite famous for being home to a number of significant cultural institutions in almost all the arts. Still, the city's GLBT community didn't have a single chorus at a time when even smaller centres had a number, and have had them for years. The RHP really exploded, seemingly full-blown, on the Winnipeg scene. The spark was lit by a small ad in that city's newsrag *Swerve* in the first month of the last year of the old millennium. Jeff Staflund was the one who placed that ad. He had just arrived from Regina where he was the accompanist for Prairie Pride and couldn't believe there wasn't a chorus in the city. His ad triggered a flood of interest from over fifty people who shared his desire—Jeff is much too Prairie-Canadian to call it a vision—for an outlet for their love of song. Quietly, Jeff organized a small core of planners who laid the groundwork necessary to launch a chorus: a music director, Scott Naugler; an accompanist, Rob Lindey (not Jeff—he just wanted to sing this time); a board and a rehearsal home,

Norwood United Church in St. Boniface.

By fall they were ready. These efficient organizers were even able to augment Naugler's professional direction with two additional part-time directors. Stephen Cocks is a trained musician who also chips in some time on the piano. Alan Blanchette is described as Winnipeg's own Dame Edna who has an exuberant style of directing but also expands the chorus' skill with vocal coaching. In a relatively short time, the result of Jeff's hopes is a huge chorus with full support bodies and an auxiliary that can handle the logistics of renting a first-class hall, welcoming, billeting and entertaining two out-of-town choruses. Their love of music was proven by the dedication to rehearsals up to six hours long and three times a week. The result was a flawless performance with crisp entrances and cut-offs, tight harmonies and moving dynamics, all performed with expression of the music's emotions that showed on every face. We in Bridge City are still working on that one: They even had a simple and creative uniform and a T-shirt to boot!

Being part of any gathering on this scale is an exciting experience, but when you're part of something shiny and new, the high of that energy is better than any drug. For the older choruses, that nascent high was felt some years ago. For Prairie Pride that was four years. Their beginning was largely the result of one individual's initiative as well. James McNinch was like Jeff Staflund in that he came from a chorus in another city, Saskatoon. So he pushed to get support for his habit in his new home. Before he could get the critical mass of singers needed to get a chorus, James called for some help from his old chorus friends. The Bridge City Chorus was glad to drive down to the Queen City and do a little concert at St. James United Church in the hope of inspiring a good crop of recruits. Even though the concert didn't draw a huge crowd, it was successful in whetting the appetites of a couple dozen people, including Vernon McCarthy to direct and Jeff to accompany.

So, here's to you Winnipeg. You now have a wonderful, new, shiny thing that will more than delight you but make life just that much better. And good luck to you all of the Rainbow Harmony Project!

— Glen Horton

LEATHER BACK

(Edmonton) A decade ago the prairies saw the development and growth of a number of organizations for those into leather and various fetishes. Most major cities on the prairies boasted a resident leather group who regularly held public functions and contact between the groups was regular. During the '90s the visibility of those leather groups faded and most of them closed up shop or members migrated to groups for bears and those who like them. While leathermen and the leather lifestyle didn't disappear, those groups which provided social and educational outlets fell on hard times.

One of the most active groups was Northern Chaps in Edmonton, who are back in the public eye after a long hiatus. A new executive is planning to bring that city's leather and fetish community back into the public eye.

The current executive consists of Marsha Black (Empress XVII and a past executive member of Northern Chaps), Jason Tarrant, Scott Bryen (Mr. Alberta Drummer 1994 and a past executive member of Northern Chaps), and Geoff Williams, another past executive member of the group. Tarrant will be moving to Vancouver this summer and will be replaced on the executive by Jim Alexander, a past executive member of the group and a B.E.A.R.S. executive member.

The group has scheduled regular events at Buddy's Pub on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month. During Pride Week the group resurrected their event called "Black Solstice" which provided an evening of fetish and fantasy for participants.

The new executive is encouraging new and old members to come out and get reacquainted with the reactivated group. Further information can be obtained at their website www.sandmproductions.com/northernchaps.

EDITORIAL

This issues of *PERCEPTIONS* is number 150 with the next issue marking the 19th Anniversary of publishing the prairies' first gay and lesbian newsmagazine. It's difficult to imagine that we've survived long enough to become Canada's longest running gay and lesbian publication. When we began this adventure back in 1983 we had no idea that we'd still be here getting eight issues out each year.

There have been many times over the years that we've felt like packing it in as it does consume a large amount of time and energy. We build our lives around the eight weekends a year when we put in 20-plus hours making sure the next issue gets to the printer early Monday morning. Each time we feel it may be time to pack it in we receive a large donation from one of our loyal readers or someone drops us a note letting us know how important *PERCEPTIONS* is in keeping them connected to the larger queer community. That feedback is important and keeps us going.

In 2002, when the majority of people are wired and connected to the Internet you would expect *PERCEPTIONS* to no longer be needed. But that appears not to be the case. It's still difficult to find information on what is happening on the Canadian prairies. When we first started publishing there were no queer publications on the prairies. While there are now a number of queer publications on the prairies, their focus is largely on lifestyle issues. We remain the only publication to focus mainly on news.

Lately I've been talking to a very interesting man on-line and was pleased when he informed me that *PERCEPTIONS* was invaluable to him when he was coming out more than a decade ago. I still hear from people in the process of coming out how valuable *PERCEPTIONS* remains for them. I guess we can't pack it in yet.

That doesn't mean we don't welcome involvement from more people. We appreciate those who submit articles on a regular basis. We appreciate our loyal subscribers who renew each year faithfully with many sending us needed donations. *PERCEPTIONS* has always struggled to pay the bills. We also appreciate our advertisers, many of whom have been with us for years.

As our community continues to grow and more people are exiting their closets, it remains important that we have the means to share information about our diverse communities and share the stories of our lives. The mainstream media continues to show a reluctance to address the real issues in our communities. When we do appear in the mainstream media it is all too often sensationalized.

Hopefully *PERCEPTIONS* will remain around as long as it is still providing a service to our community. That will depend a lot on you, our loyal readers, and the support you continue to show us financially.

BUSTING OUT ALL OVER

by Gens Hellquist

The first decade of the 21st Century is going to belong to gays and lesbians as our numbers continue to swell with people coming out and beginning their journey of addressing issues of their own sexual orientation. People are busting out of the closet in record numbers.

At Gay & Lesbian Health Services we are seeing record numbers of people coming out. Our gay and lesbian youth group is attracting two or three new youths each week and with upcoming initiatives in the education system those numbers promise to continue to increase.

As the discussion of homosexuality becomes more open in our society, more people have hope that perhaps they can safely step out of the closet. As more gays and lesbians become visible in the media and on television sitcoms, more people realize that they are not alone.

It's not just young gays and lesbians who are taking those first tentative steps out of the closet. More older people realize that it's time for them to start living their lives for themselves instead of for others who are uncomfortable with homosexuality. As the topic become more visible, those who are somewhere in the middle of the Kinsey scale feel encouraged to explore those unexplored parts of their sexuality.

At GLHS we've also noticed a huge increase in the number of transgendered people, both male and female, who are now starting to emerge to find support and looking at ways to begin their journey to a place that is more comfortable and fitting for them.

With all the heightened awareness of sexual orientation issues, I'm concerned about whether the resources are in place to help people on their journey. We are stretched to the limits at GLHS and the lack of adequate and equitable funding may well mean layoffs which will make meeting the needs more difficult. Only a few locales in this country have resources to help people through the coming out process or help them cope with the ravages of homophobia.

Those who are beginning their journeys in rural areas or small cities across the prairies have an even more difficult time. While a few young people travel in from places like Prince Albert and North Battleford to participate in our youth group, most do not have such luxury. They are forced to struggle with their sexual orientation issues and homophobia alone. The rates of suicide and substance abuse in our community is not likely to fall until we are able to have more resources in place to provide safety, support and information.

While gays and lesbians are more visible in the media, the breadth of that representation is still very shallow. The diversity of our community seldom gets presented in movies or television. *Queer As Folk* might be an interesting view of how some gay people live their lives, but for most gay people it does not represent who they are. Until we begin to see a more diverse representation of our lives, many people are still going to believe they are alone and isolated.

While we have developed a diverse range of organizations in some of our communities, they may still not be able to provide places for many gay and lesbian people to feel they belong. Those organizations that are in existence have enormous problems securing the resources to reach out to a broad cross-section of queer people. At GLHS we don't have the money to advertise our services widely and know full well that should we do that we

would be inundated with requests for services. We don't advertise our toll-free phone line but still receive a 100 plus calls a month, which costs us upwards of \$100/month. If we advertised widely we expect that it would cost \$1,000/month to pay the long-distance charges.

The clamor from the religious right about giving taxpayers' money to queer organizations will continue to grow as we advance forward. As they recognize that we are winning the battle for equality and they are losing their battle to maintain a climate of hate and intolerance, they will become more vocal. The recent distribution of anti-gay literature in Saskatoon and Regina attests to that. This past week Campus Crusade For Christ brought an anti-gay speaker to the University of Saskatchewan to rail against the pink peril of homosexuals.

We must become more creative in developing a diverse range of programs that enable those standing in the closet door to come out. This will require resources, financial and human, that will be difficult to come by. We must demand that our governments and those responsible for the health and well-being of all Canadians provide resources to enable us to support all members of our tribe. We all must find ways to become part of the solution, whether that's volunteering with a local queer organization and/or making a financial contribution to the fight for equality.

The next few years are going to be crucial in building a society that values the lives of all people, including gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people. If we work together we can be successful in building communities where hate and intolerance

(Please see *Busting Out* on page 9)

*People are busting out
of the closet in record
numbers.*

Busting Out (continued from page 4)

are no longer acceptable. Unfortunately, homophobia is still accepted today. Those who wish to perpetuate the current climate hide behind free speech, even though they would be soundly condemned by public officials if they said similar comments about ethnic or racial minorities. We must also demand that our leaders stand beside us instead of hiding behind homophobia.

Victory is within sight. Are we willing to take those final and crucial steps to insure it? **[P]**

LOSS OF A PIONEER

by Gens Hellquist

The gay and lesbian community in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Canada lost one of its pioneers with the death of Peter Millard on December 8, 2001. Peter died from a rare form of leukemia after a three month illness. I lost a dear friend and mentor who provided me with years of support and guidance.

I still remember the first time I met Peter. It was at one of the first dances put on by Saskatoon's first queer organization. Those dances were held at the Unitarian Centre each Saturday night. At this particular dance, someone came running over to me and suggested that I had to meet this university professor who had shown up. I sat down with Peter and tried to convince him that he should get involved in our fledgling organization. It didn't take much to convince Peter that he should join the struggle for queer equality.

Peter joined the board of the Zodiac Friendship Society, which later became the Gay/Lesbian Community of Saskatoon. He served as President for two years in the early 1970s and became a tireless fighter for equality. In 1975, when the Doug Wilson affair broke out on campus, Peter became a leader in that fight for equality on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan. He became instrumental in working for changes on campus that provided safety and equality for gays and lesbians, including helping to form the Gay Academic Union.

Working with Peter on queer issues was always a joy for me. His support for me was an important part of my life and my activism and I will miss that very much. Whenever homophobia reared its ugly head in Saskatoon or Saskatchewan, I'd call Peter or he'd call me and we'd talk about how we could combat the hate and intolerance. He was a mentor for me and when I'd want to run in with both guns blazing he'd convince me to go in with only one gun blazing. Of course, he'd usually pick up the other one and be beside me.

In the 1980s, when the Tory government was bashing gays and lesbians, Peter helped form the Coalition for Human Equality to combat the hate and intolerance coming out of the Devine government. He contributed an article on gay issues to a book about the Devine rule in Saskatchewan. Peter also was a regular contributor to this publication in the 1980s and early '90s. His writing was always insightful and thoughtful.

Peter was interested in equality for all people and served as President of the Saskatchewan Association for Human Rights for a period of times in the 1980s. At the time of his death he was Co-Chair of the Board of Gay & Lesbian Health Services.

Peter was a professor in the English Department of the University of Saskatchewan and was chairman of that department from 1985 to 1991 when he retired. He moved out to Gibsons, BC where he had his dream house built. However, he missed his friends in Saskatoon and the prairie sky and moved back to where he felt he belonged. I was glad to have him back and it wasn't long before he was involved again in queer issues in Saskatoon.


Peter Millard was known and respected for more than his gay rights involvement.

Peter was known and respected for more than his gay rights involvement. He was an expert in Inuit art and discovered and promoted folk painter Dmytro Stryjek. Like many of Peter's friends I own a number of Stryjek paintings. He was also instrumental in introducing many of his friends and colleagues to art and helped promote the careers of many local artists.

Peter was born in 1932, into a working-class family in South Wales. After serving in the Royal Air Force he came to Canada where he enrolled at McGill University. He began lecturing at the U of S in 1963 and was a full professor by 1970. He specialized in the literature and culture of the 18th century.

While Peter was a man of many accomplishments, I'll remember him for his numerous acts of kindness. He often talked to me about his concern that my work as a gay activist didn't provide me with any type of pension in retirement. At times of unemployment in my life, Peter would hire me to do work on one of the many homes he owned, even though I wasn't that good at it. Many people have talked to me about how Peter was the first person they even talked to about being gay or lesbian. He was never too busy to reach out to a young person and help them with the struggles they were going through.

On January 5, 2002, two hundred people gathered in the Adam Ballroom of the Delta Bessborough Hotel to remember Peter's life. Later that evening a smaller number attended a supper at the Faculty Club on campus where we reminisced about Peter and his life.

I will remember Peter for his support and his kindness. He was an important mentor in my life and I miss him already. He's not there when I want to phone and talk about my frustrations over our current battle for equality. He's not there to share his wisdom about how we can win this one. Thank you, Peter, for being a part of my life. 

WESTERN CUP

(Calgary) Western Cup is an annual multi-sport tournament sponsored by Apollo—Friends in Sport. This year marks the 20th anniversary of this tournament held every Easter Weekend. There are four simultaneous tournaments running during Western Cup weekend—Badminton, Bowling, Curling and Volleyball—providing lots of opportunities for participants and spectators. The popular event will see over 500 athletes participating from March 28 to 31. Athletes from across Canada and from the USA will show their pride as they compete in the various sports.

In addition to the sporting activities, a wide range of social activities will be part of the weekend event, including Calgary's largest community dance. Other social events include an opening Meet and Greet Party at Metro Boyztown & The Rekroom on Thursday; an entertainment night at the Hyatt Regency on Friday; an Awards Brunch also at the Hyatt on Sunday; and a Survivor's Party will end the weekend Sunday evening at Money Pennies.

The host hotel and official party headquarters for the event is the Hyatt Regency in downtown Calgary. A special rate is available to those who purchase a Spectator Party-Pak for \$45. The Party-Pak includes free entry to all sporting events as well as to the many parties.

Information on purchasing tickets for the events can be obtained by calling Bill at 403-243-7494 or by e-mail at marketing@apollocalgary.com. To participate in the badminton tournament call Todd at 403-266-3189; bowling call Bill at 403-243-7494; curling call Phil at 403-282-2808; and volleyball call Alan at 403-229-1680. Additional information on the weekend can be found on-line at www.apollocalgary.com.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

(Saskatoon) Gay & Lesbian Health Services has begun a dialogue with Saskatoon police regarding ways to work together to better meet the needs of queer people in Saskatoon. GLHS executive director Gens Hellquist and administrator Moneca McLean met with police chief Russell Sabo and superintendent Bernie Pannell in May to discuss a number of concerns they have.

The two informed the police about the number of gay bashing incidents that go unreported because people perceive that the police might not be responsive. "This is a serious issue," Hellquist said, "As some of those bashings are committed by repeat bashers and if they are not reported the police have no opportunity to catch the bashers and prevent further incidents."

They also complained about the homophobic activities of a few police officers who repeatedly harass men in Kinsmen Park. "Those officers make it a habit to go down to the park and harass men cruising there," Hellquist said. "It's not uncommon for them to write tickets for minor infractions which often get thrown out of court if the person is brave enough to fight the ticket. However, most men pay the fine rather than appear in court," Hellquist said. They also tell people that they must leave the park because they have had "complaints" reported. It is not illegal to be in Kinsmen Park or any other park at night and the police have no authority to order people out of the park.

Hellquist also offered the services of GLHS to train police officers on the realities of being queer in Saskatoon. "I think they need anti-homophobia training to help them better interact with gay men, lesbians and bisexuals," Hellquist said.

"We also expressed our concerns of how

police would react to calls about domestic abuse in our community," Hellquist said. "While the police have received education about how to handle domestic abuse in heterosexual relationships, they have received no information regarding queer couples."

Sabo and Pannell were interested in what the two representatives of GLHS had to say and suggested that when more officers are hired this fall they will look at ways to develop community policing programs aimed at the gay community.

Superintendent Bill Hartgarten, who was unable to attend the meeting, met with Hellquist at a later date and expressed his concern that police officers in Saskatoon were exhibiting homophobic attitudes.

"It was a good first meeting," Hellquist said, "but more work needs to be done. We'd like to see the development of a police/queer community liaison committee or at least a few officers designated as contacts with the community. That way, when people have problems with bashing or the police, we can refer them to specific officers and hopefully alleviate their concerns about the reaction they will receive from the police."

Hellquist said GLHS intends to pursue this issue with the police as they see it as an important area that needs addressing.

IN YOUR AREA

Changes?
Events?
call 306
956-3672

MANITOBA

WINNIPEG

GROUPS

ACE (Arts, Culture & Entertainment): Monthly trips to arts events & socializing, Ryan 269-1637, web: members.shaw.ca/ace.group

COALITION for ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA RESOURCES & EDUCATION (CARE): Meeting info call 478-1160.

COALITION OF LESBIANS ON SUPPORT & EDUCATION (CLOSE): Project for understanding abuse in lesbian relationships, c/o Rainbow RC.

COUNCIL ON HOMOSEXUALITY & RELIGION: Library & counselling, box 1912, R3C 3R2, Chris 772-8215.

DIGNITY WINNIPEG: LGBT Catholics, Sandra 772-1185 or Thomas 287-8583, box 1912 R3C 2R2, web: dignitycanada.org

FAMILIES OF CHOICE: Mothers' networking group, c/o RRC or email: sogh2000@hotmail.com

FEDERAL SEXUAL ORIENTATION LOBBY: Working for equality of gays & lesbians in federal legislation. Box 1661, R3C 2Z6, 284-5208.

FRONT RUNNERS: Lesbian/gay AI-Anon. 304 - 310 Donald St, 943-6051.

GAY & LESBIAN EDUCATORS: Support/social group, meets monthly, 774-5019, web: geocities.com/gale_mb

GAY/LESBIAN RELIGIOUS RESOURCES: 774-5354.

GAY FATHERS: c/o Rainbow RC, meets on 1st Wed & 3rd Thur. 7:30-10pm, member at Rainbow RC 3rd Thur.

GAYS FOR EQUALITY: Public education, advocacy, law reform. Box 1401, R3C 2Z1, Chris 772-8215.

INTEGRITY: Gay/lesbian Anglicans, Pat 287-2243.

IMPERIAL SOVEREIGN COURT OF WINNIPEG & ALL MANITOBA: Drag shows for charity, Box 26053-116 Sherbrooke St, R3C 4K9, 338-6206.

JEWISH GROUP: c/o Rady Jewish Centre, 477-7534.

LAMBDA BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL CLUB: 115 Campbell St, R3N 1B3, 775-9222, web: gaycanada.com/lambda

LESBIAN & GAY IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE: c/o Rainbow RC.

LESBIAN WRITERS GROUP: meets monthly, 783-3638.

LGBT CENTRE: U of W, meets Fri 12:30pm, Rm OR13 Bulman Centre 4th flr Concourse, 786-9025.

MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF NORTHERN NUDISTS: General PO, Box 1401, R3C 2Z1, 943-5313.

MANITOBA BEARS: meets 3rd Sat at Gio's, 1-800-465-1242 or 694-3164.

MASQUERADE: Trans/vestite/gendered, X-dressers social/support club, meets 2nd Tue, 586-9356.

MEN'S SPIRITUALITY GROUP: Book discussion, Sun 7pm, 453-0865.

NEW FREEDOM: 12 step GLBT group, meets Sat 8:30pm, Rainbow RC, Barry 475-8191.

NINE CIRCLES: 705 Broadway R3G 0X2, 940-6000. Community Health Centre for these AIDS Services Organizations: **AIDS SHELTER COALITION INC:** Housing coordination for PLWA. **MANITOBA ABORIGINAL AIDS TASK FORCE:** 772-6800 fax

772-2784, email: mbababids@mb.imag.net **MANITOBA AIDS COOPERATIVE:** Provincial lobbying network, 774-7722. **KALI SHIVA:** Volunteer care for PLWAs. **VILLAGE CLINIC:** Support for people with AIDS, pre/post-testing counselling. —**GAY COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** HIV/AIDS education. Support for partners, families & friends of HIV+. Men & partners support group, Mon.

ONE HEART STREET MINISTRY: Helping hustlers get off the street, 774-1208.

OUT THERE SPORTS & RECREATION: web: www.gaycanada.com/outthere —**BOWLING:** Tue 7pm, Academy Uptown Lanes. —**CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING:** various weekends. —**FLOOR HOCKEY:** 3rd Sat 5pm, River Osborne Centre. Osborne & Pembina/Corydon. **SNOW-SHOEING:** TBA, —**GOLDENBOY VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE:** Mixed, games Oct-Jun, Gordon Bell High School: 3 Borrowman Pl, Fri 8pm, Mike 452-5780.

PFLAG (PARENTS & FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS): Support group, meets at Norwood United: St. Mary's Rd & Tache, last Tue, 7pm, c/o Rainbow RC, Diane 233-6602.

PRIDE COMMITTEE: meets bi-weekly, 6:30pm, Theatro Café: 1625 Sherbrook St, www.gaypridewinnipeg.com

PRIME TIMERS: Social group for mature men, 26072-116 Sherbrook, R3C 4K9, 889-2835 10am-9:30pm.

PROVINCIAL AIDS/STD LINE: Mon-Fri 8:30am-8:30pm, 945-2437(945-AIDS) or 1-800-782-2437.

QUEER STAGES: Box 26062, 116 Sherbrook St, R3C 4K9.

RADIO SHOWS: THIS WAY OUT: Planet Out's newsmagazine, CKUW 95.9 FM, Mon 3-3:30pm. —**QUEER IN YOUR EAR,** CKUW 95.9 FM, Mon 5:30-6pm.

RAINBOW HARMONY PROJECT: Gay/lesbian choir, practices Wed 7pm, Norwood United Church: 160 St. Mary's Rd, 269-1637, web: www.therainbowharmonyproject.ca

RAINBOW MINISTRIES: Outreach of the United Church, 302-G Weston St R3E 3H4; 954-2904.

RAINBOW PRIDE MOSAIC: GLBT Centre at U of M, 195 Helen Glass, 474-7439, box 43-University Centre, R3T 2N2, meetings until April: Thur 4:30, web: geocities.com/uofm_rpm

☎ **RAINBOW RESOURCE CENTRE:** 284-5208: 1 - 222 Osborne St S, Box 1661, R3C 2Z6, office-474-0212, e-mail: wglrc@escape.ca> fax: 478-1160. web: www.escape.ca/~wglrc/ Centre & library hours: Wed-Fri: 1-4:30pm & Mon-Fri: 7:30-10pm. —**INFORMATION LINE:** info/peer counselling, Mon-Sat 7:30-10pm 284-5208 or toll-free in Man & NW Ont: 1-888-399-0005. —**BREAKING BARRIERS:** Combatting homophobia in Manitoba's health care, 478-1160: weekdays 9-5 + machine. —**BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH EDUCATION:** addressing homophobia in schools. —**BI-PRIDE:** 2nd & 4th Thur 7:30pm. **DROP-IN COUNSELLING:** by appointment, Mon 3:30-6:30pm. —**COUNSELLING:** Mon 3:30-6:30pm or by appointment —**FAMILY RAINBOW:** social group for GLBT parents & their children. —**MEN'S SOCIAL/SUPPORT GROUP:** 2nd Fri, 8pm. —**LESBIANS & AIDS EDUCATION PROJECT:** box 1521, R3C 2Z4, 474-0212. —**LESBIAN SOCIAL/DISCUSSION GROUP:** 1st & 3rd Tues 7:30pm. —**FREE LEGAL CLINIC:** 4th Wed 7:30pm. —**MANITOBA GAY/LESBIAN ARCHIVES:** access by appointment. —**TRANSGENDERED SUPPORT GROUP:** information & discussion, 3rd Fri, 7:30-10pm & 1st Sun 2:30pm.

SWERVE: Winnipeg's monthly queer community newsmagazine, 200-63 Albert St, R3B 1G4, 942-4599, fax 947-0554, web: swervemedia.org

WINNIPEG/GAY/LESBIAN/BI YOUTH GROUP: Sup-

port/social group: 13-25, meets Thurs at RRC, 284-5208, 7:30pm. web: geocities.com/wlgbayouthgroup

WINNIPEG GAY/LESBIAN FILM SOCIETY: 403-63 Albert St, R3B 1G4, 947-0552, email: reelpride@hotmail.com

WINNIPEG LEATHER/LEVI CLUB: c/o box 3079, General PO, R3C 4E5.

BUSINESSES

ADONIS SPA: Bath, 24 hrs. 1060 Main St, 589-6133

AQUARIUS BATH: 457 Notre Dame Ave, 947-1763

CLUB 200: Gay/lesbian dance bar and restaurant. 190 Garry St. Box 125 St. Mary Ave R3C 0M8, 943-6045.

GIO'S: Private bar: 155 Smith, 9pm-2am, Fri until 3:30am, 786-1236.

HAPPENINGS: Gay dance bar & lounge, Sat until 3:30am. 274 Sherbrook St (upstairs) 774-3576 & **DOWN UNDER** (downstairs)

MASSON'S B&B, 181 Masson St. phone or fax (204) 237-9230.

WINGED OX GUEST HOUSE: 82 Spence St, R3C 1Y3, 783-7408.

BRANDON

AIDS BRANDON: Support for PLWAs, friends & family, education, 726-4020 fax 708-4344.

☎ **GLOBE(GAYS & LESBIANS OF BRANDON & EVERYWHERE):** Phone line Fridays, 7-9pm, 727-4297. Socials: 3rd Fri, 2nd flr Canadian Inn, peer support. Box 22039, R7A 6Y9.

PFLAG(PARENTS & FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS): Meets 1st Tue, 727-0417.

RAINBOW YOUTH ALLIANCE: Under 25 yrs, meets Thur 7pm, 731B Princess Ave, Cathy 727-0417.

THOMPSON: JUST BE! Gay, Lesbian & bisexual interest group, meets 1st & 3rd Mon, Burntwood Health Centre, 7:30pm, 677-1791.

SASKATCHEWAN

REGINA

GROUPS

AIDS PROGRAM SOUTH SASK: 1504 B Albert St, S4P 2S4, Hotline/info: 924-8420 or 1-877-210-7623, 24-hr info tape on AIDS: 525-0905.

DIGNITY REGINA DIGNITÉ: Donald 569-3666. Potluck supper/service on 3rd Sun.

EGALE-REGINA: A gay/lesbian rights lobbying group. Box 24031 Broad St PO; S4P 4J8.

GBLUR(GAYS/BISEXUALS & LESBIANS OF THE U OF R): Social/support group for students, faculty & staff, meetings during school year 2nd Mon, room 28: University Centre, 525-6046, c/o URSU, U of Regina, S4S 0A2, email: g_blur@hotmail.com

GLCR(GAY/LESBIAN COMMUNITY OF REGINA): Non-profit society operating the community centre, lounge, café & "Outside" dance bar, 4pm daily, 2070 Broad St. Box 3414, S4P 3J8, 569-1995, email: glcr@sk.sympatico.ca

GAY/LESBIAN/BISEXUAL RESOURCE CENTRE: Support Centre for students of the U of R, c/o GBLUR, UC 225, Mon/Wed 12:30-4:30, Fri 1:30-3:30.

GAY & LESBIAN TEACHERS: Meets last Sat, 525-6362.

ILLUSIONS: Transgendered social/support club, Shirley 761-0414.

INSIDE-OUT: Support/social group for gay/bi/lesbian youth 13-25, meets 1st Tue, GLCR, 525-6046. email: insideout@hotmail.com

LAVENDER SOCIAL CLUB: Monthly women's dances: 3rd Sat, 543-1892. Email: dunique@sasktel.net

LESBIAN, BISEXUAL & GAY PRIDE COMMITTEE OF REGINA: Meets regularly to plan Pride & other events. 545-9472, web: gaycanada.com/pride-regina

NEW BEGINNINGS: Coming-out group for ages over 25, Fred 525-6046.

OSCAR WILDE & COMPANY: gay theatre troupe, 2232 Retallack St, S4T 2K6, Nils 352-2919.

PFLAG (PARENTS & FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS) meets 2nd Wed 7:30pm, 2070 Broad, Mary Anne 586-1168, email: pflag.regina@canada.com

PINK TRIANGLE COMMUNITY SERVICES(PTCS): 525-6046. PO Box 24031 Broad St PO, S4P 4J8 email: ptcsregina@canada.com> Health, education & support group, **INFO LINE:** Sun-Tue: 8:30-11pm, Sat 10pm-1am counselling referrals/events, answering machine. **LENDING LIBRARY:** books & videos, 2070 Broad St.

POTLUCKS: Men's, monthly in homes, email: duncan@coteaubooks.com **Women's,** 1st Sun 5:30pm, Karen 522-9369

PRAIRIE PRIDE CHORUS: Gay & lesbian chorus, rehearsals: St. James' United Church: 4506 Sherwood Dr, Wed 7:30pm, Evanna 522-8307.

QUEER CITY CINEMA: Produces bi-annual film/video festival, 2236 Osler St, S4P 1W8, 757-6637 fax 757-6632

REGAL SOCIAL ASSOCIATION OF REGINA (RSAR): Imperial Court & entertainment society, Bruce 525-9431, 2345 St. John St. S4P 1S7, email: courtreginacanada@yahoo.com

REGINA ZEPHYRS SPORTS CLUB: Mixed volleyball, St. Michael's School: Hamilton & 1st Ave, Sun 3pm, Cate 569-2308.

SENSIBLE SHOES NEWS: Saskatchewan's Lesbian newsletter, box 3693 S4P 3N8, 775-0169, e-mail: sensibleshoes@write.me.com

SOLIDARITY AND PRIDE: Trade unions in solidarity, Donna 522-8571 ext 260.

BUSINESSES

HOMO DEPOT: Sells T-shirts, cards, jewellery, gifts, etc. 2070 Broad, open nightly.

TWO SPIRIT GUEST RANCH & RETREAT: web: twospiritguestranchandretreat.com Box 369 Regina Beach S0G 4C0, 731-2200.

SASKATOON

GROUPS

AIDS SASKATOON: HIV/AIDS Education, support/ outreach services & advocacy. Box 4062, S7K 4E3, 130 Idylwyld N, S7L 0Y7. —**AIDS Hotline:** Weekdays 9am-5pm: **242-5005**, toll free 1-800-667-6876, fax 665-9976.

BRIDGE CITY CHORUS: gay/lesbian chorus, box 8671, S7K 6K8, 955-7347, email: bridgecitychorus@yahoo.ca

CIRCLE OF CHOICE: Gay/lesbian AA, Grace Westminster United, Wednesdays 8pm, Don 665-5626.

DIVERSITY NETWORK: Pride Week committee, 668-3676, fax 652-9924, box 8701, S7K 6S5, web: www.saskatoonpride.ca

GLHS (GAY & LESBIAN HEALTH SERVICES): 665-1224 or 1-800-358-1833: Health agency, education, support & counselling, Library. Box 8581, S7K 6K7, fax: 665-1280, web: www.glhs.ca Offices at 203-220-3rd Ave S. — **GAY & LESBIAN LINE & DROP-IN:** peer counselling & info, Mon - Fri: 12-10pm, Sat 12-6pm. — **WOMEN'S DISCUSSION & SOCIAL GROUP:** Tue 7:30pm. — **TWO SPIRIT CIRCLE OF FRIENDS:** Tue 7pm. — **MEN'S CLUB:** Thur 7:30pm. — **QUEER CINEMA:** Thur 7:30pm. — **OUT & PROUD YOUTH:** support/social group for ages under 22, Fri 7:30pm. — **QUEER AS FOLK:** videos of US series, Sat 2pm. — **POTLUCKS:** open to everyone, 3rd Fri 6:30pm. — **20 SOMETHING:** Wed 7pm

ILLUSIONS: Transgendered social/support group, Bobbi 343-7378.

PERCEPTIONS NEWSMAGAZINE: Prairie gay/lesbian newsmagazine. Box 8581, S7K 6K7, 244-1930, fax: 665-1280, e-mail: perceptions@shaw.ca **Next layout:** Jan 18, 19 **Collating Wed:** Jan 22, 7pm

PFLAG (PARENTS & FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS): Support/ education group, meets 1st Sun, Dennis Morrison 664-4228 Kay 477-1476.

PLWA (PERSONS LIVING WITH AIDS) NETWORK OF SASKATCHEWAN: Support/services for persons with HIV/AIDS, families, friends & partners. Box 7123, S7K 4J1, 218-C Ave B S, 373-7766 or 1-800-226-0944 fax: 374-7746. Fundraising Bingos: City Centre Bingo.

Q-SASK: Network group for queers & allies on the U of S, c/o USSU LGBT Centre, Thur 7pm.

RAINBOW RADIO: Sun 8:30-9:30pm, CFR 90.5 FM, email: rainbow_radio@hotmail.com

USSU LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL CENTRE: Education, advocacy, support & social activities, 104 M.U.B. weekdays 10am-2pm, 966-6615, email: lgb_centre@sask.usask.ca>

BUSINESSES

DIVA'S: Private members club. 110 - 220 - 3rd Ave S, alley entrance, 665-0100.

OUT OF THE CLOSET: Fundraising venture of GLHS, T-Shirts/magazines/cards/jewellery/gifts, GLHS, Mon - Fri: 12-10pm, Sat 12-6pm.

STEAM WORKS: Men's bathhouse, #122 behind 126-20 St W, 7pm-3 am, 955-0090, www.steam-works.ca

REGIONAL

PRINCE ALBERT: LAMBDA NORTH: Support/ social group, meets 2nd Tue 7:30pm, 1-800-358-1833, email: pa.info@dk.sympatico.ca

RAVENSCRAG: OUT IN THE COUNTRY: GLBT Support group & **SPRING VALLEY GUEST RANCH:** Bed & Breakfast, licensed country tearoom, etc. Box 10, Ravenscrag, SK, S0N 2C0, 295-4124.

SASKATCHEWAN ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES: Pansexual/panfetish, web: groups.yahoo.com/group/SaskAlternativeLifestyles/

YORKTON: AIDS YORKTON: Education, advocacy, support & information, 782-2395, email: aids_yorkton@hotmail.com

ALBERTA

CALGARY

GROUPS

AIDS CALGARY AWARENESS ASSOCIATION: Support, prevention, education, information & training services, 200-1509 Centre St S, T2G 2E6, 508-2500 fax 263-7358. email: info@aidscalgary.org

ALBERTA GLBT RURAL YOUTH OUTREACH: 102-1212-1 St SE T2G 2H8, 283-8591 fax 270-3209, email: ppalberta@plannedparenthoodalberta.com

ALBERTA ROCKIES GAY RODEO ASSOCIATION (ARGRA): 208-223-12 Ave SW T2R 0G9, 541-8140, e-mail: argra@canuck.com Web: www.argra.org Monthly dances, Victoria Park Community Hall.

ALPINE FRONTRUNNERS: Box 22854 Bankers Hall T2P 4J1, Mon 6pm, Sat 10pm, Eau Claire Y, 777-9499 box 1505, email: aussietime@hotmail.com

APOLLO FRIENDS IN SPORTS: Sporting activities, 777-9499-1-ext3000, 304-223-12 Ave SW, T2R 0G9, web: apollocalgary.com, Box 6481, Station D, T2P 2E1. **Badminton:** Oct-Mar, Sat 12pm, Talisman Centre. **Bowling:** Sep-Apr, Lets 10 Pin Bowlerama: 2916-5 Ave NE, Wed league, 6:30pm. Sun league, 2pm. — **Outdoor Pursuits:** various events & times. — **Volleyball:** Sun 4pm, YWCA: 320-5 Ave SE.

ARCTIC FRONTRUNNERS: Running group, Sun 11am, 87 Ave & 114 St: U of A, 436-7892.

BEARBACK CALGARY: For hirsute guys & admirers, Box 82064-1400-12 Ave SW, T3C 0N0, Lyle 286-4636, web: www.bearbackcalgary.com Coffee night: 2nd Mon, Timothy's: 1610-10 St SW, 7:30pm. Bar night: 4th Sat, 9pm, the Backlot: 209-10 Ave SW.

BNBC (Buck Naked Boys Club): Men's non-sexual naturist social group: last Fri, 717-3717, web: www.bnbcc.org

CALGARY COALITION ON HIV/AIDS: mail c/o AIDS Calgary, 508-2500.

CALGARY LESBIAN HISTORY PROJECT WEBSITE: www2.mtroyal.ab.ca/~canderson/htttilepg.htm

CALGARY MEN'S CHORUS: Box 23127 Connaught PO, T2S 3B1, practices Sun 6:30pm, Old Y: 223-12th Ave SW, 262-6295, e-mail: menschorus@yahoo.com

CAMP 181 ASSOCIATION: Dances, campouts. Box 702, Stn M, T2P 2J3. 234-8973, web: www.camp181.com

CHILDREN NEED SUPPORT TOO: for children of glbt parents, 102-1212-1 St SE T2G 2H8, 283-8591 fax 283-8563, email: ppalberta@plannedparenthoodalberta.com

DIFFERENT STROKES: Swim club, 9812 Austin Rd SE, T2J 0Z2, Dan 252-2938, Sun 7pm & Wed 6pm, YWCA: 5th Ave & Macleod Trl.

DINNER PARTY CLUB: Dinners in members homes, email: andrejhall@hotmail.com

EQUALITY IN ADOPTION FUND: Same-sex adoption issues, box 61 station M, T2P 2G9.

FAMILY & FRIENDS COMMUNITY CLUB: Support for families with GLBT children, meets 3rd Sun 5pm, Hillhurst United Church: 1277 Bowness Rd NW, Terry 283-8278.

FAIRY TALES GAY & LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL COMMITTEE: box 23177 Connaught RPO, T2S 3B1, 205-4747 fax 237-5838, 500-1304-4 St SW

FRONTRUNNERS: Gay & Lesbian AA, meets Tue, Thur & Sat, 8:30pm.

GAY CALGARY.COM: 543-6970 fax 703-0685, 240-1934-19 Ave SW, web: www.gaycalgary.com

GAY FATHERS: Support group, 20 Hendron Rd NW, T2K 1Y5, Potluck suppers: 3rd Sun, Coffee: 1st Thur, 8pm, 948-6601.

GAY & LESBIAN BISEXUAL ACADEMICS, STUDENTS & STAFF(GLASS): 312 MacEwan Hall, 2500 University Dr, T2N 1N4, 220-2872, email: glass@acs.ucalgary.ca

GAY LESBIAN & BISEXUAL COLLECTIVE AT MOUNT ROYAL COLLEGE: Student Assoc. Z-201-4825 Richard Rd SW T2E 6K6, 240-6401.

GAY/LESBIAN COMMUNITY/POLICE LIASON COMMITTEE & HATE CRIMES UNIT: Promotes communication & safety, meets: 4th Mon 5:30pm, Cultural resources room, Police headquarters, Cst Doug Jones 268-8319, Stephen 874-0693.

GLCSA(GAY & LESBIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOC): 234-8973, Old Y: 206-223-12 Ave SW, T2R 0G9. Events machine: 234-9752. -e-mail: glcsa@glcsa.org web: www.glcsa.org **GAY & LESBIAN LINE,** Drop-in, library, info, peer counselling, referrals. **PHONE LINE & DROP-IN:** Mon-Thur 6:30-9pm. -Office hours: Mon-Thur 3-9pm, Fri 1-4pm. -**MEN'S PROJECT:** peer support, Mon 7pm, Money Pennies: 1742-10 Ave SW -**INSIDE OUT:** Youth Group 16-25yrs, Mon 7pm. -**SHEQ:** Women's self image/coming-out discussion group.

ILLUSIONS SOCIAL CLUB: For TV/TS, 426-8th Ave SE, T2G 0L7. Meets on 2nd Sat, 265-7789, e-mail: bnblethr@cadvision.com

INTEGRITY CALGARY: Anglican support group, worship service: 2nd Sun, St. Stephen's Church: 1121-14 Ave SW, 7pm, Peter 701-5699, email: dwfrancis@aol.com

IMPERIAL SOVEREIGN COURT OF THE CHINOOK ARCH: Entertainment society, socials, drag shows. 416-37 Ave NW T2K 0C5, 277-4775, e-mail: iscca@iname.com

LUTHERANS CONCERNED: Monthly meetings, mail c/o box 11095, Edmonton, T5J 3K4, Wayne 220-3899, web: members.shaw.ca/lccalgary

MCC (METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH) CALGARY: Box 82054 Scarboro PO, T3C 3M5, 265-6222, e-mail: MCCCA@telusplanet.net Accepting Christian Church for gays & lesbians, services 4th Sun 7:30pm. -Inquiry classes, Wed 7pm. Bankview Hall: 2418-17 St SW.

MR. & MS.GAY CALGARY: c/o Rainbow Lambda Society, box 24089 Tower PO, T2P 1K8.

NETWORKS: Social, cultural & service organization for 40+, Ron 239-9708 or Mary 286-3756.

NOT ALONE: Support group for ex/wives of gay/bisexual men, 20 Hendron Dr. T2K 1Y5, 282-6592.

PRIDE CALGARY: box 35, 940-17 Ave SW T2T 0A2, 240-3485 or www.pridecalgary.com

RADIO SHOWS: SPEAK SEBASTIAN: Radio show: CJSW FM 90.9 or cable 106.9 or Real Audio: www.cjsw.com, 1st & 3rd Wed 9pm, 127 MacEwan Hall: 2500 University Dr NW, T2N 1N4, Stephen 874-0693, email: stlock@nucleus.com **URBAN SEX:** CJSW 90.9 FM 2nd & 4th Wednesday: 9pm, 127 MacEwan Hall, U of C: 2500 University Dr NW T2N 1N4, 220-3902. **DYKES ON MYKES:** 1st Tue, 9-10pm CJSW FM 90.9, 127 MacEwan Hall 2500

University Dr. NW T2N 1N4, 275-5414, e-mail: dykesonmykes@rocketmail.com

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CRUISERS CAR CLUB: Meets 3rd Tue, Chicken Hawks' Bistro: 550-11th St SW, Steve 660-6305, e-mail: rmcruiser@hotmail.com.

SHARP(SOCIETY HOUSING AIDS RESTRICTED PERSONS): 530-2-3012-17 Ave SE T2A 0P9, e-mail: sharp@canuck.com 272-2912.

SOUTHERN ALBERTA HIV/AIDS CLINIC: 213-906-8th AveSW, T2P 1H9, 234-2399.

TEAM CALGARY: Sports events & Gay Games, 1138 Kensington Rd NW, T2N 3P3, 571-5133 or 242-0223 fax 217-0492, email: teamcalgary@hotmail.com

TEATRO BERDACHE: GLBT Theatre Ensemble creating & performing Canadian plays, email: tberdache@aol.com 245-0127.

WESTERN LEATHER FEDERATION(formerly known as the NATIONAL LEATHER ASSOC CALGARY): Pansexual leather fetish support/social group, Don 293-9275, box 33-970-17 Ave SW, T2T 0A2, web: www.wlf.ab.ca -socials 1st Fri, Eagle: 424-8th Ave SE, 8pm. Workshops: 3rd Tue.

WOMEN COMING OUT: Support group, Calgary Birth Control Assoc: 304-301-1220 Kensington Rd, 283-5580.

WOMEN IN LEATHER DISCUSSION GROUP: 685-2807, email: wildcalgary@yahoo.ca

BUSINESSES

AWOMAN'S PLACE: Bookstore 1412 Centre St S, 263-5256

THE BACKLOT: Public dance bar, 209-10 Ave SW, 265-5211.

B&D EMPORIUM: 246-8th Ave SE, 265-7789.

BOYSTOWN:METRO & THE REKROOM: 213 - 10 Ave SW, 265-2028. Men only except Wed, strippers.

THE EAGLE: Leather-bar, 424-8th Ave SE, 263-5847.

MONEY PENNIES: Bar 1742-10th Ave SW, T3C 0J8, 263-7411.

NAWLINS: Cajun Bar & Grill, 550-11 Ave SW, 294-9074

OUTLOOKS: Alberta's gay newspaper, box 439, 1039-17th Ave SW T2T 0B2, (1-888)228-1157, fax 228-7735, email: outlooks@cadvision.com

RAINBOW PRIDE RESOURCE CENTRE: Retail & info, L100-822-11th Ave SW, T2R 0E5, 266-5685 fax 266-5604 email: marriotk@cadvision.com

WESTWAYS GUEST HOUSE: 216 - 25 Ave SW, T2S 0L1, 229-1758.

XTENSION: Community & business interactive telephone system, (1-888) 228-1157.

The VERGE: Public restaurant & lounge, 4A-2500-4 St SW, 245-3344.

306-310- 17 Ave SW: ARENA COFFEE BAR. DE-TOURS: Gay/lesbian dance bar, women's night: Thur, Men's night: Fri, 244-8537. **GOLIATHS SAUNATEL:** (rear entrance) men only & **TEXAS LOUNGE:** small private club. **VICTORIA'S RESTAURANT:** Mixed clientele, open late on weekends.

EDMONTON

GROUPS

ABORIGINAL CIRCLE OF TWO SPIRITS: Cultural/ language support group, 201-11456 Jasper Ave, James 429-4605. Meeting: 11456 Jasper Ave, Thurs-

days 7pm, James 429-4605 or George 488-5773.

AFFIRM UNITED: United Church GLBT support group, meets last Sat 7:30pm, McDougall United Church: 10025-101 St, 462-8896 or 429-4269, email: lderkach@telusplanet.net

AGAPE: Sex/gender differences/schooling focus group for educators, meets 3rd Thur noon, Rm 7-114, 7th fir Education Nth U of A, email: andre.grace@ualberta.ca

ALBERTA PFLAG FAITH SOCIETY: Spiritual support for parents of gay/lesbian/bisexual children & para-church groups, meets last Sun 2pm, Christ Church: 12116-102Ave, 465-3057, email: pflag@interbaun.com

ALTERNATIVE BEARS: Social club & Sat night swim for bears & friends, Eastglen Pool: 116 Ave & 68 St, 11pm, 30-1031-104 St, T5J 1B9, web: altbears.8k.com

ARCTIC FRONTRUNNERS: Running group meets Sun 11am except in winter, 87 Ave & 114 St, Bill 436-7892.

BADMINTON LEAGUE: Mixed, Fri 7-9 & Sun 2-5pm, Bruce 453-1244, email: cwbyteddy@powersurfr.com

BI-WOMEN COFFEE GROUP: Monthly coffee & social activities, 468-3316, email: bwcoffeegroup@yahoo.ca

BREAKFAST CLUB: 2nd Sun, Dianne 433-0374.

BRETHREN MENNONITE COUNCIL SUPPORT GROUP FOR GAYS/LESBIANS/BISEXUALS: Tim 434-5360 or Heather 987-4974, Email: jonrach@mns.com

BUCK NAKED BOYS OF EDMONTON: Nude recreation, meets 2nd Sat, Fred 471-6993, email: brbc4@interbaun.com

CLASSICS: Social group for lesbians over 40, 1st Sun 2pm, Secrets: 10249-107 St, Donna 456-1008.

COFFEE NIGHTS: Mixed: Sun 7pm, Jax Bean Stop: 11511-104 Ave

DIGNITY EDMONTON: A support group for lesbigay Catholics & friends. Call Joseph at 481-4218.

EDMONTON RAINBOW BUSINESS ASSOCIATION: Meets 2nd Tue 7pm, Bloomsbury room, Orlando Books: 10123 Whyte Ave, 422-6207.

EDMONTON VOCAL MINORITY: Lesbian/gay/bi & friends chorus, PO Box 12091- Main, T5J 3L2, 479-2038, fax 425-8543. evm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

EQUAL=ALBERTA: Working for equality for gays, lesbians & bisexuals, box 431 T5K 2P2, 488-3234 fax 482-2855 email: equalalberta@hotmail.com

FREE TO BE VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION: web: <http://queerseek.com/freetobe/> -**INTERMEDIATE SKILLS:** Mon 8pm until June, Oliver School, Dave 421-9117. -**COMPETITION:** Mon 8pm until Jun 13, Oliver School, Dave 421-9117. -**RECREATIONAL LEAGUE:** Mon 6pm (until May), St. Vincent school: Groat Rd & 107 Ave, Alex 424-9984.

GAY ARAB EDMONTON: Social/support group, meets Fri 8pm Second Cup: 124 St & 102 Ave, web: gayae.tripod.com

GAY & LESBIAN COMMUNITY CENTRE OF EDMONTON (GLCCE): Referrals, support & resources. 488-3234 or 1-877-882-2011 ext 2860. 45-9916-106 St, Box 1852, T5J 2P2, fax 482-2855, Email: glcce@interbaun.com web: www.edmc.net/glcce Mon-Fri 7-10pm: Peer counselling, drop-in & live phone line. Office hours: weekdays 1:30-5:30pm. -**GAY MEN'S OUTREACH CREW:** HIV prevention/peer education, call Rob 488-0564, email: gmoc@interbaun.com -**TALKING TOGETHER:** Men's discussion group, Sun 7pm. -**YOUTH group,** Sat 7pm. -**YOUTH AFTER SCHOOL:** Coming-out drop-in for 14-19 yrs, Wed 4-6pm. -**WOMEN'S NIGHT,** Thur 7:30pm. **FREE INTERNET:** Weekday afternoons.

GAY & LESBIAN INFORMATION SERVICES of EDMONTON: Computer bulletin system, info services to gay/lesbian community. 488-2711, 8am - 12am daily.

GAYWIRE radio program, CJSR FM88.5, Thursdays 6-7pm, 492-5244. web: www.cjsr.com

HIV NETWORK OF EDMONTON SOCIETY: Health promotion, advocacy, support & education. 10550-102 St, T5H 2T3, 488-5742. web: www.hivedmonton.com

FEATHER OF HOPE ABORIGINAL AIDS PREVENTION SOCIETY: #702, 488-5773. **ICARE (INTERFAITH CENTRE FOR AIDS/HIV RESOURCES & EDUCATION):** Spiritual support, 448-1768, www.icarealberta.org **LIVING POSITIVE: EDMONTON PERSONS LIVING WITH HIV SOCIETY:** Support & education for all PLWHIV/AIDS. 488-5768 or 1-877-975-9448, e-mail: livepos@connect.ab.ca

ILLUSIONS: Social club for TVs and TSs. Monthly newsletter, Box 356 Main PO, T5J 2J6, 424-2685, meets 2nd Thur & 3rd Sat GLCCE 8pm, member at GLCCE Tue pms, email: illusionsx42@yahoo.com

IMPERIAL SOVEREIGN COURT OF THE WILD ROSE: Box 11394, T5J 3K6, 423-5014, meets last Wed 8pm, Garage: 10244-106 St. email: wildrosecourt@yahoo.com

LAMBDA CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCH: Non-traditional evangelical church for gay/bisexuals, meets at Garneau United Church: 11148-84 Ave, T6G 0V8, Sundays at 7pm, 474-0753, email: lambdachurch@shaw.ca

LGBT MOVIE CLUB: Sat pm; Orlando Books, 963-2983.

LIATRIS SOCIETY: Social group for gardeners, 434-5717, e-mail: liatrisociety@hotmail.com

LUTHERANS CONCERNED: meets monthly, 426-0905 #3, e-mail: icedmonton@lcn.org box 11095 T5J 3K4.

MAKING WAVES: Swim club, Sun 8pm and Tue & Thur 8:30pm until Jul, Scona Leisure Centre: 10450 - 72 Ave, Tue 8:30pm Scona Pool, Warren 718-7598, email: makingwaves_edm@yahoo.com

NLA (NATIONAL LEATHER ASSOC) EDMONTON: Pansexual leather fetish support/social group, box 35015 Oliver RPO: 11229 Jasper Ave T5K 2R8, email: nlaedmonton@canada.com Fetish nites, 2nd Fri, Roost. Business meetings, 3rd Thur 8pm.

NORTHERN CHAPS: Educational leather, levi & fetish club for all genders & orientations, meets 1st & 3rd Sat 10pm, Buddy's: 10116-124 St, mail: box 74042 Peppertree RPO, T5K 2S7, email: nothernchaps@telusplanet.net

NORTHERN LIGHTS SQUARE DANCE CLUB: Wed 7pm Sep-Jun, Grandin School: 9844-110 St, 922-4355 email: bfiorapro@aol.com

NORTHERN TITANS BOWLING LEAGUE: 10 pin, Gateway Bowling: 34 Ave & Gateway Blvd N, Sat 4:30pm until Apr, Garry 426-6311, 10-10721-116 St, T5H 3M3.

OPEN DOOR CLUB: Social group for GLBTs & friends, Grant MacEwan College, email: opendoorclub@hotmail.com

OUT AT THE SYMPHONY: Gay/lesbian outings to Sat Masters concerts, Paul 401-2512.

OUTreach: For students/staff at U of A, Office SUB bsmnt #040C, Tue & Thur 11-12:30, Box 75, Rm 620, Students Union Bldg T6G 2J7, 1-877-882-2011 ext 2029. Meets during school year Tue 5pm Athabasca Hall, 6pm Second Cup: 112 St & 87 Ave. e-mail: outreach@ualberta.ca

POLICE LIAISON COMMITTEE: Promotes understanding between the city Police and the GLBT community, 488-3234.

PFLAG/T: Support/Education for parents, families & friends of lesbians/gays/bisexuals/transgendered.

Meets 3rd Tue, 7:30pm, GLCCE, Call Lynne at 462-5958. email: pflag@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

PRIDE COMMITTEE: web: prideedmonton.org or 479-4636 or 619-6908.

PRIME TIMERS: Support/social group for gay/bisexual men over 40, #1093-11444-119th St T5G 2X6. Monthly meeting: 2nd Sun 3pm, Unitarian Church: 12530-110th Ave, 426-7019.

PURPLE HAZE: Bisexual social/support group, meets 2nd Tue GLCCE, 913-3076, email: purplehaze@briecase.com

SOLO: Social club lesbians /bi-women, weekly events, 447-4776 or 488-3878.

TEACHERS GROUP: Support/social group, Second Cup: 11210 Jasper Ave, 2nd last Fri - 4pm, 432-1660.

TEAM EDMONTON GAY/LESBIAN SPORTS ASSOC: Organizer for team going to Gay Games, Johann 437-0687.

TIMES .10: Edmonton's magazine. 10121-124 St, T5N 1P5, 415-5616, fax 453-2347, www.times10.org.

TRANSEXUAL & TRANSVESTITE SUPPORT GROUP: Meets 4th Tue & 2nd Fri, 7:30pm, email: edmonton_egret@hotmail.com

WOMONSPACE: Social, recreational, educational society & newsletter for lesbians. #103-10612-124 St, 482-1794, email: womonspace@hotmail.com **WOMONS DANCE,** 3rd Sat 9pm.

YOURS, MINE, OURS & US: Support group for LGBT Parents, meets 1st & 3rd Wed 7pm, Liz 415-5434 or Garry 426-6311.

YOUTH UNDERSTANDING YOUTH: Support/social for up to 25yrs, meets at GLCCE Sat 7pm, 488-3234, mail c/o GLCCE, web: yuyouth.tripod.com/yuy/

BUSINESSES

B & D EMPORIUM: Custom fetish & "queen" size store, 9652 Jasper Ave, 428-LTHR, email: brblethr@cadvision.com

BOOTS & SADDLE: Private club, 10242 - 106 St, 423-5014.

BUDDY'S: Nightclub, 11725B Jasper Ave.

DOWN UNDER: Men's bath-house, 12224 Jasper Ave, T5N 3K3, 482-7960.

EXECUTIVE EXPRESS: XXX gay videos, 202-11745 Jasper Ave, T5K 0N5, 482-7480.

NORTHERN LIGHTS GUESTHOUSE: PO Box 515, Edmonton, AB T5J 2K1, 1-403-483-1572.

ORLANDO BOOKS: Lesbian owned GLBT Bookstore, 10123 Whyte Ave, 432-7633, www.orlandobooks.com

PINETRAILS GET-A-WAY: Cabins, camping, fishing, RR1 Westrose, T0C 2V0, 780-586-0002.

PRIDE VIDEO: 10121-124 St, 452-7743.

ROOST: Dance club, 10345 - 104 St, 426-3150.

SECRETS: Restaurant & bar, 10249-107 St, 990-1818.

STEAMERS: Men's bath-house, 9668 Jasper Ave, 422-2581.

WOODY'S: Pub, 11723 Jasper Ave, 488-6557.

GLBT ALBERTA: Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Two-spirited rural youth outreach project, 403-383-8591 fax 383-8563, 102-1212-1 St SE Calgary T2G 2H8, web: www.glbtalberta.com

GRANDE PRAIRIE: PEACE COUNTRY RAINBOW ALLIANCE: 780-513-0863, box 1492 T8V 4Z3.

SOUTH PEACE AIDS COUNCIL: 9909B - 112

Avenue, T8V 1V5, 538-3388, fax: 538-3368 e-mail: spak@telusplanet.net

HIGH LEVEL GAY & LESBIAN SUPPORT GROUP: Box 3434 T0H 1Z0, Email: naltag.aygroup@hotmail.com

JASPER: AIDS COUNCIL OF JASPER: Box 1090, T0E 1E0, 852-5274.

LETHBRIDGE

GAY AND LESBIAN ALLIANCE OF LETHBRIDGE AND AREA: PEER SUPPORT LINE: 308-2893, Mon & Wed: 7-10, web: www.gaylethbridge.com/GALA/ **THE GALA OCCASION:** Newsletter, 1229-41 Ave N, T1H 6A4. **SISTER SUPPORT:** for meeting info call support line or email: sister@gaylethbridge.com **DANCES:** last Sat, 9pm, Croatian Hall: 4410-43 St N. **COFFEE NIGHTS:** Wed 9pm, Hugo's Lounge: 3rd Ave & 8th St.

GAY & LESBIAN AA: Open meeting, Tue 8pm, 329-4666.

LETHBRIDGE HIV CONNECTION SOCIETY: 1206 - 6th Ave S, T1J 1A4. Info Line: Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, 328-8186, fax 328-8564. PLWHIV/AIDS support group, bi-monthly.

PFLAG: Support for parents/family/friends of gays/lesbians, 1st Mon, 329-4666.

MEDICINE HAT

MEDICINE HAT LGBT SOCIETY: Social/support, Pub night, Lava Lounge: the Lodge, 1st Sat, 8pm, 403-527-7099, 1-877-882-2011(ext)4009, web: lgbt_mh.tripod.com 550C Allowance Ave SE, T1A 3E3.

PFLAG (PARENTS/FAMILY/FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS): community potlucks, 3rd Sat 7pm, 527-1779, web: www.pflagmh.homestead.com/main.html

Sexual Orientation Support: Group, library & newsletter for youth under 25, C156, Medicine Hat College, web: sos4gayyouth.homestead.com/sos.html

NORTHERN RAINBOW YOUTH: Support group for high school students, Crystal 1-780-790-0775, e-mail: nry13_18@hotmail.com

RED DEER

CENTRAL ALBERTA AIDS NETWORK SOCIETY: 400-5000-50 St, T4N 6C2, 346-8858.

PRIDE ON CAMPUS: mail c/o SARDC, box 5005, T4N 5H5, Outreach Line: 304-6789, fax: 3347-8510, Tue-Thur, 7-11pm. Mon pm coffee nights, web: www.webspawner.com/users/prideoncampus

WOOD BUFFALO HIV & AIDS SOCIETY: Support, education, 743-9200, fax: 743-4496, box 5253, T9H 3G3, E mail: wbhas@eudoramail.com

**SUPPORT OUR
ADVERTISERS!
THEIR SUPPORT
HELPS KEEP US
PUBLISHING.**

A MIXED BAG

Holy, Matrimony!	P103 (March 13/96): 9
Activist or Friend	P103 (March 13/96): 10-11
Invisibility Prevents Equality	P106 (July 24/96): 8
Do We Believe We're Equal?	P107 (Sept. 11/96): 6
The Stench of Fear	P111 (March 12/97): 8
Off the Narrow Way	P112 (April 23/97): 6-7
Editorial [regarding criticism and negativity in the gay/lesbian community]	P116 (Oct. 22/97): 3
From Where I Sit	P120 (April 29/98): 4-5
Something Borrowed, Something Plaid	P120 (April 29/98): 10
The Times – They Are A-Changing	P122 (July 29/98): 6-7
Editorial [regarding possible responses to homophobic organizations and information]	P124 (Oct. 28/98): 3
They Just Don't Get It	P125 (Dec. 9/98): 6-7
A New Breed of Activist	P132 (Oct. 27/99): 4-5
The Problem with Labels	P134 (Jan. 26/00): 4-5
A Smorgasbord of Spontaneous Sex	P139 (Sept. 13/00): 6, 8
Love and Hate: Surviving Valentine's Day	P143 (March 14/01): 7-8
Affirmations	P152 (April 24/02): 6
What Will the Neighbours Think?	P154 (July 31/02): 4, 8
On Aging	P154 (July 31/02): 6

On Christmas Day of 1994 it was announced that my brother, whom I love dearly, and his then girlfriend, whom I also love dearly, were engaged to be wed. This was to occur on a date that was yet to be announced.

Being the brother of the groom, it was generally expected and verbally agreed upon that I would be the best man. It was also discussed that if I was going to be attending the wedding I would be bringing a date of my choosing. I even went so far as to confirm with both halves of the couple that my escort for this event would be a man. This, too, was generally expected and verbally agreed upon. At the time...

The wedding date has now been secured, the hall is booked, and the band has been picked out. The bridesmaids are trying to figure out what they'll ever use their dresses for after the wedding and I've started thinking about what to say in my toast. So, with four months to the wedding, it's the perfect time to tell me that I can bring a date, just not a man. This "request" was made to insure that none of the extended family would get offended and walk out at the reception on the happiest day of my brother and sister-in-law-to-be's lives.

The entire situation only took two phone calls to resolve. One to my brother and sister-in-law-to-be reassuring them that if I were to bring a date to their wedding that it would not be overly obvious. In other words, I would not be doing the Lambada in the middle of the dance surrounded by anyone's easily offended relatives. The other was to my very understanding, kind, generous, and giving prearranged wedding escort, to make sure that he was okay with the fact that us going to the wedding together would have to be understated.

Why the subject even came up I don't know, since the best man stands at the front of the sanctuary during the service, and sits at the head table during the reception/dinner portion of the evening. Not to mention having to dance with the maid of honour, the bride, the bride's mother, aunts, and sisters, making a toast and generally being the ambas-


sador to the other side of the family, I wouldn't exactly have time to make out in front of the entire extended family. Even though outing myself to four hundred people all at once is one of my all-time dreams, but then isn't it everyone's?

Although the situation was resolved, there are still a few things nagging me. For instance, why should I be held responsible for the feelings that may be hurt because other people have a problem with who I happen to be? If a problem's going to arise, why not ask people not bring their prejudices to the wedding instead of asking me to take the responsibility for the behaviour of other supposed adults? Am I going to be comfortable going to this wedding knowing that I'll have to consciously repress my behaviour even though, had this not come up, my behaviour would be the same?

Then there's the question of bashing: Will a fist fight break out if either my date or I slip up and accidentally say or do the wrong thing? The thought of having to slug an in-law is usually considered appealing, but taking into account that the bride's parents love me like a son and hold me in quite high esteem, I'd hate to have to have to punch any of their relatives even in self-defence, but I would if I had to. Although I've been on dates in public surrounded by strangers who aren't in a "happy, happy, joy, joy; I'm at a wedding" kind of a mood and not gotten bashed, the thought of it happening at this particular event hasn't seriously crossed my mind.

Along with being very surprised at my non-homophobic brother and sister-in-law-to-be asking me not to bring a man to their wedding, I was also shocked and a little bit angry at how much homophobia was oozing its way into this blessed event. The thought of being asked to behave like someone I'm not at my own brother's wedding was enough to bring the little activist in me to life. Thoughts of what I might do about this situation if I wasn't the type to resolve things passively flew through my mind. Being the best man I could show up five minutes before the ceremony in a pink chiffon dress, six-inch-high heels and a

bee-hive wig saying, "Where do I stand?" Then again, I could just open my toast to the groom by saying something like, "Here's to my heterosexual brother, at least Mom and Dad can get grandchildren from one of their boyss." But I'm not one to be bitter. However, my brother's lucky that they agreed that I should bring a date or else at my wedding, whenever that is, he'd be the one in the chiffon.

Oh well, all's well that ends with a mutually disappointing compromise. I get to take a date but we only get to dance together once all of the hicks that'll be there are either passed-out drunk or have gone home, and my brother and sister-in-law-to-be have to pay for another plate at one of the guest tables. Now the only question that remains is how are the hotel arrangements being made? 

Over the past two years, fighting for gay and lesbian rights has become such an integral part of my life. The sense of accomplishment I receive after speaking to local groups about homophobia and heterosexism is a feeling I would not trade for anything. The exhilaration experienced after the achievement of gay and lesbian rights, no matter how small the gain may seem to others, gives me the strength to persevere when our rights as homosexuals are yet again denied. When I'm faced with homophobia expressed by some stranger off the street or institutionalized homophobia from various authority figures, the activist in me surfaces, challenging the homophobic attitudes because such opinions will not be tolerated. However, I noticed when homophobia is expressed by friends in words or actions my beliefs are not expressed with the same conviction and, to be honest, I do not know if they should be. I wonder if homosexual activists should approach all societal interactions, even interpersonal, without changing the intensity to which we react to the intolerance. Should we approach some relationships with less vigour and more assistance, helping the individuals see the error in their thinking?

Some people do not agree with the notion of heterosexuals working at organizations that promote the health and welfare of the homosexual community. Concern is often expressed that heterosexuals can not adequately help homosexuals because they have not experienced what being homosexual is like. I would be lying if I told you that this concern has never crossed my mind. However, having had the opportu-

nity to work with several heterosexual volunteers at the local gay and lesbian health organization I know my apprehension has been unfounded. I find it interesting that we spend a considerable amount of time fighting for recognition of our rights by the heterosexual community but when heterosexuals recognize our rights and want to join us in our fight we are apprehensive of them. We spend so much time viewing heterosexuals as the enemy that sometimes we do not properly cultivate relationships

I do not think we have the right to demand more of the heterosexual community than we demand of our own community.

with the ones that are gay positive. I believe that even if we do cultivate a friendship with gay positive heterosexuals, sometimes we are too critical of their progress of acceptance and understanding of homosexuality.

I believe oppression of one's basic self is wrong and I am not willing to let others dictate my sexual orientation and personality. However, I have on occasion modified

my behaviour to make situations more comfortable for the people involved. At the request of my gay and lesbian friends I have adjusted my behaviour because their relatives and friends are still working on their acceptance of my friends' sexual orientation. These people are special to me, so without hesitation I did modify my behaviour. I thought that my homosexual friends had every right to ask me to change my behaviour as well as I had every right to decide to avoid the situation if I thought I was compromising myself. When I examined the way I behaved when my straight friends and family asked me to change my behaviour because they feared others would not be as accepting of my sexuality, my reaction was not the same. As with my homosexual friends I did modify my behaviour but I did not do this without hesitation or discussion. Whether I said something to them or not, I felt isolated and hurt by their request. I questioned the extent to which they were accepting me. If I did discuss their request I made sure that they knew that I'm only changing my behaviour because I care about them. I had also indicated that I will not always be so accommodating and they would have to learn to accept me for who I am. I care for my friends equally, regardless of their sexual orientation so is it fair for me to penalize my straight friends for making the same request as my homosexual ones? Maybe I'm justified in having a different set of rules for my straight friends. I think that I should examine each request in the context of the situation and the type of friendship without regard to the individual's sexual orientation.

For many people in the gay and lesbian community coming out is a long, tedious process. Looking back at my own experience, I spent almost a decade before I was willing to accept myself as normal. I believe that just as I had to come out as gay, heterosexuals have to go through a process of "coming out" as gay positive. They have to go through the process of questioning their internalized homophobia. They start to view the homophobic attitudes as myths, becoming more accepting of homosexuals. Heterosexuals have to go through a process of self-disclosure of their acceptance of homosexuals as normal. Though they are gay supportive they fear rejection from society if they disclose their beliefs. Homosexuals have to go through a process that leads them to discussing homosexuality in a variety of contexts, each requiring more personal growth and conviction, which I maintain is similar in some respects for heterosexuals. Not all homosexuals come out completely to society and no one has the right to make them become activists. The gay and lesbian community has the right to educate heterosexuals who are homophobic.

However, I do not think we have the right to demand more of the heterosexual community than we demand of our own community. I believe that as long as my heterosexual friends and family are supportive of my sexual orientation and are willing to take personal measures in support of homosexual rights, that is all I can ask for. I do not believe I have the right to demand of anyone, including heterosexuals, a loyalty to myself that would require them to have the courage to physically defend me. I would hope that they would come to my aid if I needed assistance, but if I cannot guarantee I would come to their aid if they were in danger, is it fair for me to expect them to?

Sometimes as activists we get so wrapped up in the role of activism that we sometimes fail to see that we are alienating people. This becomes even more detrimental when we alienate someone we care about. In a short period of time my family and friends have come a long way in their acceptance of me. Even though they have a way to go in their acceptance of the homosexual community, I have decided to be patient be-

cause they are continuing to grow. I think it is unrealistic of me to expect my heterosexual counterparts to be totally accepting of the homosexual community in a matter of months or a few years when my coming out process took many years. When I'm dealing with societal perceptions of homosexuality I'm an activist without hesitation. However, when I'm dealing with heterosexual friends and family I'm an activist in moderation. //

I was listening to a CBC Radio open line program a few days ago when I was once again reminded of one of those problems that get in the way of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals achieving full equality. The topic of discussion was whether Canada was doing enough to fight HIV and AIDS. The discussion quickly generated into what appeared to be a contest to see who could phone in with the most bizarre theory about AIDS. The wing-nuts were definitely out in full force, madly dialling their phone to ensure they could air their wacko theories on AIDS.

At one point the discussion did get onto the topic of how the epidemic of other health issues in the lesbian and gay community has a direct and powerful impact on HIV and AIDS. If you don't feel good about yourself you're not likely to use condoms. If you're drunk or stoned your chances of reaching for a condom in the throes of passion are substantially less than if you're sober. AIDS will continue to kill many in our community until the other health issues are dealt with.

One of the few sane and positive callers to the program commented on her surprise on hearing that the gay and lesbian community had so many other health issues like poverty, low self-esteem, mental illness, substance abuse, etc. All the gay people she knows are professionals living happy and successful lives.

It used to be that when people thought of gay men and lesbians, and usually it is gay men most think about, they only saw degenerates living a life of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. The only people who got coverage in the media at the gay pride marches across the country were leathersmen, drag queens and, lately, bare-breasted lesbians.

Over the past few years a new image has begun to appear. Thanks to surveys of readers of certain American gay lifestyle magazines, the myth that all gay men and lesbians are successful professionals with annual incomes well above the national average has taken root. This myth is now being used as an excuse to deny us equality by those who also harp about the degenerate lifestyle that gay people have. I wish they'd get their story right. Are we hopeless degenerates beyond the pale of humanity or are we all wealthy professionals leading the life of leisure and therefore not in need of protection?

It's not uncommon for me to hear people, who are supportive of the goals of equality for all lesbians and gay men, express shock on hearing that so many in our community are suffering so greatly. Of course the only gay people they're able to see are those who have high self-esteem, enabling them to risk being visible, as well as those that have sufficient financial security that also allows them to be visible.

What we rarely see is the huge and diverse range of people who are

gay, lesbian, bisexual or simply have relationships and/or sex with members of the same gender. We don't see the young gay male who has left school because he is being gay-bashed on a regular basis. We don't see the young lesbian who is forced to sell her body on the street when her parents kick her out of the home. Those lesbians and gay men who kill themselves because the pain of homophobia is intolerable usually die in a shroud of secrecy and invisibility. The list is endless.


All too often in the gay and lesbian community those people in the greatest pain because of homophobia are invisible to the larger community.

All too often in the gay and lesbian community those people in the greatest pain because of homophobia are invisible to the larger community. We tend to find our safe and secure little niche and block out that which we don't want to see. Perhaps seeing people struggling with coming out issues reminds us of our own painful struggle to reach some degree of comfort with who we are.

Perhaps the pain of seeing someone bashed at school reminds us of how painful our teen years were. Perhaps watching someone struggle with a drug or alcohol addiction reminds us of our own struggle to find ways to deal with the pain. Perhaps we just don't give a damn.

I watched accounts this year of gay and lesbian pride events from across the country. Three-quarters of a million people marched in Toronto and thousands more in communities from coast to coast. For one brief moment some of us were visible to the larger community. We had a party and then went home. I can't help wondering how many of that 750,000 in the Toronto march will go home and become invisible again except, perhaps, to a few select people. How many of the thousands of others who marched across the country will reach out a hand to support someone else as they struggle with coming out, depression, suicide, substance abuse or mental illness. Sadly, I know the percentage is very minor.

What a difference it would make if the million plus people who participated in pride events across the country were to each do one thing over the next year to create a climate that allowed more people to come out, be visible and thereby participate in next years' pride events. If they each made a donation to an organization working on health issues in the gay and lesbian community or a donation to groups working on AIDS issues we could change the world. If they each donated a couple of hours a week to working on issues in our community we would soon reach a place where every person who feels they are different because of whom they have relationships with would feel able to be visible.

Until we reach that day when all gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and other sexual outlaws feel free to be visible, at least to the important people in their lives, we will not see full equality. Perhaps it is time that we all did something that allowed for greater visibility of all the diverse people in our community. It would change our communities and our lives. 

Lately I've been noticing a number of behaviours by gay men and lesbians that have me questioning whether winning equal rights in various human rights legislation really means much after all. It seems that all too often we're not willing to make waves or shake the boat to ensure we really have the right to equal service and equal rights. The words "sexual orientation" in human rights legislation mean nothing if we don't believe we have the right to equality and if we're not prepared to ask for what is rightfully ours.

The AIDS movement, which is still primarily led by gay men, with a few lesbians and a few non-gays sprinkled here and there, continues to frustrate me with their incessant attempts to downplay HIV in the gay male community. AIDS organizations and activists still invariably remind people that women and intravenous drug users are the fastest growing categories for new HIV infections in Canada, ignoring the reality that gay men still comprise 80% of the cases of HIV and AIDS. We go to great pains to remind people that AIDS isn't a gay disease, at the same time engaging in debates over who really owns AIDS. All rather silly discussions when one considers that gay men are doing the bulk of the dying from this epidemic and will most likely continue well into the future.

Now I agree that AIDS isn't a gay disease, as diseases don't have sexual orientation. We also haven't yet found a way to own a disease, although in our over-commercialized society I suspect that some day someone will find a way to assume ownership of some disease, hoping to make a windfall.

I'm aware of the faulty logic behind the attempt to downplay the gay aspects of HIV and AIDS but I certainly can't agree with that logic. "If AIDS is seen as a 'gay disease' then it will be impossible to obtain funding to combat the epidemic." So what if the vast majority of people living with and dying from HIV and AIDS are gay men. Are gay men somehow less human than non-gays? Do we not feel pain when we are bashed or are coping with a virus that is ravaging our system and hastening our death? Does our death from this scourge not leave behind loved ones who experience grief over their loss?

Downplaying the gay relationship to HIV and AIDS is denying our humanity and the equality of gay men and lesbians. It confirms what many people would like to believe, that somehow we are less equal than others and therefore not deserving of equal access to health services and a healthy life. From the beginning of this epidemic in North America there have been those who say that AIDS isn't important because it's just gay men who are primarily dying from it. The AIDS movement has all too often agreed with those people by attempting to negate the fact that gay men are the primary group infected by HIV in North America.

The law of this land, with the possible exception perhaps of Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and the Northwest Territories, is that lesbian and gay men are equal to the rest of the population.

Equal means equal and attempts to hide our existence or deny the ravages that AIDS has exacted on our community says we don't really believe we deserve to be equal.


I see many other examples of people not really believing they are equal. Someone removes any reference from their résumé to their volunteer work at an AIDS or gay/lesbian organization because they worry that they won't get hired when an employer sees that reference. I understand leaving it on presents some risk of not getting hired, especially when one is desperately looking for employment, but it's a clear indication that we don't believe we are really equal and deserving of that job.

On my last trip to Toronto I was browsing through Glad Day Books, reading the dust covers on the books for sale. I kept getting angrier as I continually was coming across books that proposed assimilation as a means to achieve equality: If we look and act just like non-gays then we will achieve acceptance. Well, we're not like heterosexuals and why would we want to look and act like them? To suggest that we hide any aspect of our lives, or our community, that doesn't conform into the narrow views of what is correct is just another example of not believing we are equal. Equal doesn't mean the same. It's the same as suggesting that black Canadians don't use white-face make-up to appear the same in order to achieve equality. What a crock!

Many employers now offer same-sex benefits to their employees but in all those work places that offer equal benefits there is still a pitiful lack of employees who have come forward to access those benefits. I doubt this is because those work-places don't have any lesbian or gay employees with same-sex partners. I suspect it has more to do with those employees not believing they deserve to be seen as equals.

I'm well aware that coming forward and asking for benefits, or using gay-related references on résumés, does carry some risks. It means being visible to some degree, which will always carry some risk, although I think those risks are seldom as huge as many believe them to be.

I find it very ironic to realize that, after working for over twenty-five years to create an environment where we can be treated as equals, many people do not believe they are deserving enough of those hard won rights to risk being visible to the degree necessary to demand those rights. The majority of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals still do not have the self-esteem to say that they expect to be afforded the same rights as everyone else.

It appears that legislation by itself is not going to be enough. Decades of homophobia are still denying people access to the full benefits of citizenship in this country. It appears we still have a long battle ahead of us, combating homophobia and creating an environment that allows people to believe they are deserving of rights and equality. I hope it isn't going to take another twenty-five years. 

THE STENCH OF FEAR

by Gens Hellquist

Lately I've been detecting the strong stench of fear in the air to go along with the usual righteous indignation that is spewed forth by the religious and non-religious right. This is not unusual as people who sense they are losing a battle have a propensity towards fear and seize at anything in a desperate attempt to hold on to their losing position. Those who would deny equality to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people appear to sense they are losing the battle to foist their narrow and rigid religious judgments on the rest of us. As a result they go around spreading their nonsensical theories and suggesting the end of society as we know it is at hand.

I'm seeing more evidence all the time of how desperate the religious right is getting. During a recent presentation to the local health board a former evangelical minister, who unfortunately is also a board member, proposed a host of fanatic theories. He bristled at the label homophobia suggesting the real issue is "truth-phobia". Me thinks the lady doth protest too much. Actually he's correct when he says "truth-phobia" is part of the problem. However, I would disagree with him over who is phobic about the truth when it comes to our lives.

He went on to expound on various theories of unhappy childhoods and arrested development as being the cause of homosexuality. He sounded rather frightened when he suggested the possibility of spontaneous conversion to heterosexuality for queers. It all smelled rather desperate to me.

During the recent Calgary school debate over protecting young queers from physical, emotional and verbal abuse in the school system the religious right claimed that the policy was really about turning kids gay or lesbian. Now wouldn't you think if the queer community knew how to turn other people queer that we would have converted all the world a long time ago. After all, one of our agenda items is nothing less than the total domination of the world.

The theory seems to be that merely discussing queer issues causes masses of people to run out and immediately copulate with everyone of the same sex. Now I don't know about you, but I've done a large amount of talking about queer issues lately but I've yet to have hordes of men running up to me to get into my pants. Perhaps I should feel rejected because obviously someone else is getting all those people


I've somehow managed to spontaneously convert into queers.

The instances of desperate outburst by scared homophobes are too numerous to mention and their arguments are inane at best and nasty in most cases. There seems to be a whole mob of "experts" on homosexuality who are spreading theories that bear absolutely no reality to the real life experiences of most queers. The interesting things about those who wish to popularize those bizarre theories, which also don't stand up to the light of scientific information, is that there being foisted on us by people with strong religious beliefs.

It seems that one must spread bizarre theories and facts in an effort to prop up interpretations of religious documents. I rarely hear people being so blatant as to use religious arguments to try and stop the unrelenting trek to equality for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. I suggest that there is a reason for this. Perhaps we should be pointing out that reason instead of trying to debate their bizarre theories.

I have no problem with someone having religious beliefs that say being queer is a sin for them. What I do object to is their attempt to force their religious beliefs on me and suggest that I am doomed to eternity in the lake of fire unless I agree with them and repent. It seems that holding on to their religious beliefs becomes difficult unless they can convince everyone else to believe as they do. So they attempt to buttress their beliefs with their bizarre theories.

I've always believed that I live in a society that believes we all have the freedom of religion and belief. In my naivety I also believed that was supposed to mean that I had freedom from religion and not to have someone else use their religious beliefs to deny me access to the benefits of this society.

I intend to spend less time debating the right-wing about theories about homosexuality and more time pointing out how they are trying to force their narrow religious views on me and have those beliefs enshrined into law. It's time we made them stand in the light of day and be honest about the real reason they want to deny us equality. For some reason it appears that they can't be satisfied in their beliefs unless they can force everyone else to believe the same way. Sounds more like Iran to me than the country I want to live in. 

For approximately two years in the early '90s I was involved in a Saskatoon organization called The Narrow Way. This group holds forth the promise that while no amount of therapy can cure your homosexuality, God can.

The circumstances of my upbringing did not give me a sense of self-worth and I was plagued by diffuse feelings of guilt, and an ever present sense that I was somehow different from my peers. As I grew into my teens, it was obvious to me that I was attracted to men and not women. I hated myself for this, and there was no one to tell me that I was still a good and worthwhile human being despite my orientation. Fifteen years ago, there was no support or fellowship group for me to go to like so many gay teens have now. I look at groups like Out and Proud Youth here in Saskatoon, and I hope they realize what a golden resource they have. I might have been spared a lot of pain if I had access to such a group when I was 15.

After several years of inner torment over my homosexuality, I responded to an advertisement in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*. The ad promised "healing of a homosexual struggle," so I called the number listed.

My first meeting with Harvey, the founder and facilitator of the group, was held in a local restaurant. From him I learned that the group existed as an alternative to living a homosexual life. Some months passed before my next meeting with Harvey. I eventually became a member of The Narrow Way, confident that I was well on my way to being the "normal" man I thought I needed to be. The kind people in the group were so loving, and supportive, always calling, always offering support when they felt I was slipping, which was often. I did not know at the time that they were exhibiting typical cult indoctrination behaviour, using very toxic group dynamics, "love bombing" techniques, and linking my sense of self-worth to my dedication to change and shun my homosexual feelings.

Despite the desire I had to change, inside I had a nagging feeling that it was never going to happen. I still looked as ardently as ever at men, and still had as rich a fantasy life as ever. What "reparative therapy groups" such as The Narrow Way try to do is force people to choose between serving God and living their lives. That is not a choice that anyone should have to make. My feelings of worthlessness and self-hate were increasing almost daily. I told Harvey about them, that I thought of suicide daily, and even fantasized about ways I would do it. I had a dangerous tunnel-vision sense of futility that people in danger of self-harm often experience. The only way out I could see at the time was death.

Harvey encouraged me to begin seeing a local psychiatrist, with whom he was acquainted. He told me that he felt it was important as

I needed more "help" than the group could give me. The psychiatrist, a Baptist born-again Christian, prescribed a series of psychoactive drugs for me, including Prozac. Reflecting back on this time, I realize that Harvey and this psychiatrist both had the same objective, to alter my sexual orientation. Harvey, through the group, and the psychiatrist, through psychotherapy and drug therapy. I eventually left psychiatric care no better off than before.

*Some time after
joining The Narrow
Way, I took my first
steps into the world of
the local gay
community.*

Some time after joining The Narrow Way, I took my first steps into the world of the local gay community. I had to see what the alternative was. At the time there was no group such as Gay and Lesbian Health Services, so I went to Gays and Lesbians at the University of Saskatchewan (GLUS). This was my first inroad to the community. The conflicting feelings I had at this point were very intense. I was still going to The Narrow Way twice a

week, and also getting more and more involved in activities through GLUS. It was a destructive life I had, and the feelings of worthlessness intensified. I felt weak because I was unable to make up my mind. When I was with GLUS people, I dared not mention the other group. When at The Narrow Way I had to keep silent about what I was learning about myself in the gay community. To further increase my confusion, I often saw other Narrow Way members cruising the park at the same time I was. When I confronted Harvey about this, he told me to keep quiet about it, that it was gossip, and that I had no right to question the failings of other people. Of course he wanted me to keep quiet about it; I had proof that his program was not working.

The Narrow Way people are not stupid. Quite the reverse, they are well-educated and can spot someone who is threatening their group. Eventually they spotted me, and after a nasty confrontation one day with Harvey, I was told never to come to The Narrow Way again, until I could finally decide what I want. He also told me that the gay lifestyle would ultimately lead me to spiritual destitution, and that if I chose that route, I would go to hell when I die.

In a way I owe some thanks to The Narrow Way for finally helping me see the futility of trying to change such an innate part of my being. I have never looked back, and I have finally learned that I am able to lead a dignified and worthwhile life as a gay man.

There are many organizations dedicated to trying to change sexual orientation. The three most famous are Exodus International, Love in Action, and Desert Stream Ministries. All three are based in California. There are hundreds more like The Narrow Way, that are run by individuals or churches, and have no formal affiliation.

Exodus began in the mid-'70s by two men who since have repudiated their own organization. One, sadly, has succumbed to HIV. It still continues today, with fresh leadership. Exodus Canada has an annual conference in Toronto.

Desert Stream Ministries focuses on a curriculum for a variety of sexual ills, as the religious right defines them. This is their mission statement: "Desert Stream equips the Body of Christ to minister to the sexually and relationally broken by encouraging the establishment of healing ministries within the local churches. Our various services are centred on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity and dependence on God." It sounds great to the lay person, until you realize that they have the sole aim of destroying your God-given sexuality.

Love in Action has a "re-parenting" program in the U.S. where a gay man or lesbian can live with a "normal" family and literally try to grow up again, this time hoping to get the love and affirmation that they are told they missed out on the first time. To be sure many of us have some estrangement from our families, but this has less to do with our upbringing and more to do with society saying we are worthless as lesbians and gays. Ex-gay organizations emphasize that since you have gay feelings, your upbringing could not have been normal.

Another organization, Homosexuals Anonymous, was founded by Colin Cook in the early '80s. It is a program loosely based on a bastardized version of the 12 Steps of Recovery. However, 12 steps are not enough for them; they need 14. Their founder has been caught several times in sex scandals with the young men he was "treating," yet his organization lives on.

Christians believe that homosexuality is not genetically pre-determined. It follows, then, that it must be a chosen lifestyle. If it is chosen, then it can be un-chosen. They believe that the individual's sexual orientation is malleable, curable, and repairable. Methods used to treat homosexuals for their "problem" have centred mainly around prayer and intensive psychological counselling, either individually or in a group setting.

Now, some seven years after my experience, there are even more of these ex-gay and reparative therapy groups on the prairies. I know of two groups in Winnipeg, and Homosexuals Anonymous groups are still operating in Calgary and Edmonton. I don't know if The Narrow Way still exists in Saskatoon; no one connected with it would speak to me.

One useful recruiting tool by the religious right is a video called *The Gay Agenda*. It was produced in 1992 by an organization simply calling itself The Report, but is nothing more than a front for militant anti-gay activist Lou Sheldon's Traditional Values Coalition. This Coalition was instrumental in getting amendments on the state ballot in Oregon and Colorado which attempted to restrict the rights of gays and lesbians. Both initiatives ultimately failed. It is very ironic that this anti-gay recruiting video makes repeated references to "gay recruiting techniques," saying that older gays often prey on younger men who haven't made up their minds yet. I've yet to see a more blatant anti-gay recruiting tool than *The Gay Agenda*.

This video presents images of a San Francisco pride parade, with drag queens, leather folk, and lots of semi-nude people that the average sheltered church member would find appalling. Inaccurate statistics regarding gay sex acts are presented by a Dr. Stanley Monteith, including that the average gay man has over 100 sexual contacts per year, that over 47% of us are involved in fisting and other


S&M activity, and that 29% of gay men regularly engage in watersports, and he doesn't mean doing laps at the pool. Contrasting this are the testimonies of several "cured" men who claim that their orientation was not God-given, but was a result of a plethora of emotional baggage that conspired to make them gay. One of the men featured, John Paulk, has since publicly and strongly repudiated the video, his original testimony about his cure, and the statistics quoted by the doctor. *The Gay Agenda* is nothing more than an anti-gay recruiting tool. It is a mean-spirited, untrue, and harmful attack on the gay community.

Someone e-mailed me a pointer to a web site that attempts to create a dialogue between the lesbian/gay community and the ex-gay groups. It is called Bridges Across the Divide. At first I was outraged. The very thought that we can dialogue with the religious right on this issue was opaque to my imagination. After looking around a little at the site, I have to say it is worse than I thought it might be. It is co-sponsored by some PFLAG members and a religious group called Justice and Respect. On the face of it, dialogue between two groups who have sharply divided opinions sounds like a good thing. In this case, once you pry off the lid and look at the workings, the true story becomes apparent.

The site is sectioned off with links to the different stakeholders in the whole ex-gay issue. Here is a quotation from one Christian group, Justice and Respect's "What we believe" section of the web site: "... While J&R holds the view that homosexual behaviour is outside our Creator's intent for our sexuality, we desire a respectful Christian response to persons who experience same gender attraction."

I don't see how we can dialogue when these groups continue to insist that our sexuality is somehow learned. It is this insistence by the religious right that our sexuality is an objective disorder that is the linchpin of their whole case against us. This approach is a step up from the unvarnished hatred that groups such as the Traditional Family Coalition hurl at us, but is still a "hate the sin, but love the sinner" approach. As long as the religious right refuses to consider the alternative that God might have made us this way, I for one have nothing to say to them. Bridges Across the Divide, despite good intentions, serves as nothing but a Trojan Horse for the ex-gay viewpoint.

The fellow who sent me the link to Bridges Across the Divide included several other links to Web sites that promote the ex-gay agenda. Perhaps it is his hope that I will yet come to my senses and again turn away from my homosexuality. He has his own story on one of the sites. Since I only posted to two gay-positive newsgroups, I have to wonder why he was reading them if he believes that you can get out of homosexuality through God. He describes himself as "post-gay" in contrast to ex-gay, which he finds offensive, as do I. However, post-gay is equally offensive to me, as it suggests that homosexuality is just a phase, as I thought before finally having the courage to begin coming out to myself.

We must confront the homo-haters of all faiths who continue to oppress us. We must continue to promote the message that being gay or lesbian is normal. Support groups across the prairies are thriving in many communities, and it is these groups that will prevent others, young and old, from having to go through what I went through. 

EDITORIAL

It never ceases to amaze me the amount of energy some gay men and lesbians will put into tearing down other people in our community. Equally puzzling are the excuses that people come up for not supporting an organization or not liking an individual. The energy that goes into negativity and tearing down is amazing.

Over the past year I have watched as a small group of individuals have waged a campaign to vilify one of the people in Saskatoon's gay and lesbian community who has worked tirelessly in the city and province to better the lot of gay men, lesbians and people with HIV. They have resorted to vicious distortions and out right lies in their attempts to take that person down. Now unfortunately there are numerous people in the community who are only too willing to listen to negative gossip instead of checking out the facts for themselves. This can only be characterized as internalized homophobia of the worst sort.

It appears that the Internet has become a favourite playground for these "nabobs of negativity". It allows them a degree of anonymity that they feel they need to make their negative comments. I have yet to fully enter the technological age and go on the net but I continually hear about comments made in various chat groups. Frequently those comments are about me, the organization I work for, my friends or fellow workers in our community and most often they are incorrect and misdirected. Sometimes they are downright libellous.

This problem doesn't exist solely in Saskatoon. In discussions I've had with people who've worked long and hard in other communities I often hear similar stories. Often my friends are asking themselves why they continue their involvement when their efforts are continually attacked. Not infrequently we lose valuable people and resources because they get tired of people sitting on the sidelines taking potshots.

I do not expect us all to agree on everything but I do expect a degree of civility when we discuss our disagreements. Debate is healthy as long as that debate remains civil. To sink to the level of lies and inaccurate attacks on people's character is not needed. We can get that from our enemies in the right-wing. We don't need it from within our own community. It does nothing to advance our cause for equality.

My mother always told me "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." I seldom agree with my mother but this is one instance where her words make perfect sense to me. We all need to take responsibility to ensure that debate in our community is civil and responsible. There is no room for petty personal attacks on one another.

There seems to be a pervasive attitude among many of us that it's becoming easier and easier to be openly gay in our societies and cultures and, for the most part, I believe that to be true. Understanding that some of the more difficult realities about being gay will probably remain constant for a long time (coming out to parents, being victimized by bashers), I do think that overall conditions are better than they've ever been. Some of the credit for that does need to go to those very individuals who so vehemently hate us.

The recent decision by the Supreme Court to force Alberta to protect the rights of gays, lesbians and bisexuals in that province stands as a wonderful example of how hate can often galvanize opinion in our favour. Following the Court ruling, the province, and most particularly Premier Ralph Klein, faced the pressure of having to decide whether to accept the Court's ruling or oppose it using the notwithstanding clause of the constitution. The constitutional loophole allows provinces to exempt themselves from federal interventions that they may be particularly opposed to and was put in place largely to appease the interests of Quebec. For the most part, provinces other than Quebec seldom invoke the clause, but after being told by the Court to change their ways, Alberta did have the opportunity to continue excluding gays, lesbians and bisexuals from the Individual Rights and Protections Act (IRPA). So Ralph faced a quandary: follow the Court's ruling and amend the IRPA, or invoke the clause and continue excluding those whose sexual orientation caused them to be discriminated against.

Politically, the Conservatives of Alberta are about the furthest to the right that you'll find in Canada. For over twenty years, gays, lesbians and bisexuals have been fighting the rights issue in Alberta while watching all but one other Canadian province change their human rights code. As an activist in Alberta in the late eighties, I was truly horrified by the deep-seated hatred toward gays that was expressed by Conservative politicians (lesbians were seldom mentioned or never considered quite the same threat—all part of the dismissive attitude toward women in general). Trying to debate the issue with

politicians, who consistently invoked their skewed twist of biblical passages, made it quite clear that logic was never going to work, nor was the hope of having the Conservatives respond because of compassion and justice. Premier Ralph Klein, upon hearing the ruling of the Supreme Court, probably feared the reaction of his cabinet more than any public opinion on the subject. Klein has always stood somewhat apart from his cabinet politically, enabling him to secure support for his government from a broader range of constituents. Additionally, while fairly quiet on the issue as premier, Klein had a track record of quietly supporting gay and lesbian rights while Mayor of Calgary.

Expose people to the very hatred that we face and let them see it for what it is.

So, given the pressures, what finally gave Klein the impetus to accept the Court's ruling? Well, the right wing did it for us—the very people who support the Alberta Conservative party, and those most ardently opposed to the protection of our rights.

Following the Court ruling, the right wing organized a faxing campaign to the premier's office, encouraging him to invoke the notwithstanding clause and continue to exclude sexual orientation from the Individual Rights Protection Act. After several days, Klein went to the media to express his disgust about the extreme expressions of hatred he had received from those imploring him to continue the exclusion of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. Finally, the gay rights movement in Alberta had found the strategy that would work: expose people to the very hatred that we face and let them see it for what it is. No doubt, the campaigners whose very own strategy blew up in their face are spitting nails about it now, but Klein's smart enough to know that the long-term implications of accepting the Court ruling are going to be minimal. Not once in this country has a provincial government lost an election because of the gay rights issue. Nor has any province fallen from the face of the planet, or succumbed to the flames of Hell, because sexual orientation was a prohibited ground of discrimination. So, after all these years of tireless effort to move the province on the issue of gay rights, it is the Supreme Court and the militant right that we have to thank.

But while there are examples of the right galvanizing opinion in our favour, we also need to be cautious about the more clandestine efforts of the right to quietly gain public acceptance and power. The Promise Keepers recently arrived in Saskatoon for a two-day rally at Saskatchewan Place. The Promise Keepers are an interesting study in public relations. The right has recognized the liability created by those who spew hatred. As the Republican party learned so well in the recent U.S. Presidential elections, the public is losing its patience with those who so openly condemn gays and lesbians. So when the Promise Keepers made their march on Washington last year, one could sense a kinder, gentler form of hate... one cloaked deeply in the only stated intention of the Promise Keepers: to improve the contributions men make to the family unit and the society in general. But it's still about power and it's still hate.

The stated premise behind the Promise Keepers is simple: Improve the role that men play in society by strengthening their responsibility to the family as fathers. This sense of responsibility is promoted in public where men collectively commit themselves to these ideals. But, as is always the case, one has to examine the values that underlie such motivations. The Promise Keepers promote family values (which means gays, lesbians and bisexuals automatically become the enemy), values that reflect that romantic time of the Cleavers when oppression was at its strongest. The role of women according to the Promise Keepers is clear, but never clearly expressed. By promoting the purpose of having men "reclaim" their role as heads of the family, the Promise Keepers cleverly conceal their true motives. The flip-side of what's being promoted is encouraging a return to the days when women were subservient to men in the context of both family and culture. While one could argue the degree we've moved from those times, one can't argue that the family unit, and the definition of family values, has changed—enough to threaten those who have lost so much power during this time of change.

While the Promise Keepers have understood the public value of suppressing their true agenda, everyone has a stake in exposing them for what they truly are. At the march in Washington, Promise Keepers were encouraged not to speak publicly of gays and lesbians. Taking a lesson from the Republican party experience, the Promise Keepers simply remain silent on those issues that may backfire among the public. There is some optimism here that there will need to come a time when the Promise Keepers will be forced to show themselves for what they truly are. Not unlike the Alberta experience, one has to hope that efforts to give power back to the patriarchy will again fail and, in turn, advance the efforts of those in our culture without power. [P]

They were in your high school, do you remember? The girls who, when asked their ambition in life, replied that they wanted to get married and have six kids. They dressed only to impress the boys, they wore make-up ahead of their time, they dreamed of aprons and picket fences and couldn't wait for the diapers. An education was a great thing, something that they wanted, if it meant they would meet the spouse of their dreams in one of the classes. Well I was one of them... sort of. I really wanted to get married and settle down. I wanted the house and the picket fence. But not one spot of make-up ever touched my face, I didn't dress for the boys, but rather like them, and I was always in love with Miss So-and-so that taught this or that class.

At 30 years of age, after many short and long relationships, co-habitations and some disappointing one-niters, somebody asked me to get married. She was the woman of my dreams for sure. It was truly love at first sight... except I can't quite remember first sight, 'cause I was just a little drunk at that dance. There were some complications, like I was dating a good friend of hers, and she was new to the community, just exploring, and had three kids and a hostile ex-husband. We ended up together four months later. You know the old joke about what a lesbian brings to a second date... a U-Haul.

Well, we moved in together a week after that first 'moment' when the relationship began. About a week after that she asked me to marry her. I thought she was kidding, so I said, "Yeah, sure." She wasn't kidding. She asked me twice more before I realized she was serious and seriously said "yes." We set the date for the following May, then June, then May again, then September, then August. Finally, August 22. A sigh of relief that we nailed down that detail finally. But a million details followed, and in the midst of buying a house together, one of us being in school, the other changing jobs, dealing with a break with family of origin, discovering that we didn't like the house we'd bought, etc., so followed the rockiest period of our relationship.

We contacted the Unitarian church about performing the ceremony there. They were extremely supportive and a number of members of the congregation helped us with many details. The minister called us in for pre-wedding counselling. We had a fight in front of her of such huge proportions that I was sure for days afterwards that she was going to phone and refuse to go through with the ceremony. We contemplated how the world would react to our wedding: the straight community, our straight friends, would they show up, would they support us? Our gay community, would they think that we were "aping" the straights and desert us?

We fought about the clothes we would wear. I considered how one of us wearing a dress and one of us wearing pants would appear to the guests. Would they think we were role-playing? I didn't want her to wear a dress, I wanted us to look like two lesbians getting married, not a straight couple, and I certainly wasn't going to wear a dress! We fought over the colour of my shirt, for no less than three days of

total tension. We fought over what the kids should wear. I repeatedly told the girls that they could wear pants if they wanted, but much to my chagrin they didn't want to. The day my partner told me that her son had decided to wear a kilt and hence I would be the only one not in a dress, I just about had a cow. It was a joke though, and he ended up dressing very similar to me. Sound scary? Sound like we shouldn't have gotten married?

Well, after all the stress the ceremony was a ball. The hall was packed with our friends, straight and gay, and the only snag we had was all the straight video-tape guys we tried to hire to tape it suddenly developed contagious illnesses when they heard there was going to be two brides. In the end we decided it was way more important to wear what we wanted and not worry about how it looked.

I know that this isn't for everyone, but it works for me. I feel a sense of security that I have never felt before. And we are certainly not aping the heterosexuals. We are still very gay and very proud of it, but we have a commitment to each other that makes us both feel very content and good about our relationship and what we have to look forward to in our lives together. It was an affirming experience. (And, of course the honey moon was fantastic, did you need to ask?)

So many people came forward to let us know that they supported our relationship and cared about us. We've been married eight months now. I'm sure we'll have more rocky times in the future, but we've got a little added incentive to stay together: the 80 some people who heard us say we'd stick it out even when her hair looks liked Einstein's or we don't have two nickels to rub together, or a new cute young thing moves into town. I plan for us to be in the old dykes home together when we are 90-some years old.

If anyone else is interested in going through a commitment ceremony, we found a book that was extremely helpful: *Essential Guide to Lesbian and Gay Weddings* by Tess Ayers & Paul Brown, Harper 1994. [P]

THE TIMES—THEY ARE A-CHANGING

by Gens Hellquist

I was the guest on an open-line program recently on CBC radio. It's been a while since I last subjected myself to the ordeal of trying to have an intelligent discussion on queer topics while responding to inane questions and comments from callers. The problem frequently lies in the question, or topic, the host has chosen to boost his ratings. Today the topic was "Have attitudes towards homosexuality changed over the last decade?"

The question arose when Regina mayor Doug Archer refused to declare lesbian and gay pride week in Regina because of a perceived technicality in a bylaw that was passed in 1990. The city council of that time experienced the homophobic wrath of some of Regina's less than finer citizens after they issued a proclamation for pride week, so they passed a new bylaw preventing proclamations in areas which are considered sexually or politically sensitive.

I'm never quite sure what to expect when I appear on a gay-theme open-line show. When I first started doing them in the 1970s I could expect to receive a few calls at my home from concerned people worried about my spending eternity in hell, not to mention the odd scary kook who threatened to execute his homophobia and fear on me in less than pleasant ways.

The show started off in a predictable way. The first caller was Reg from Lloydminster, a man not unfamiliar to me. Reg uses every opportunity to write letters to newspapers across the province bashing lesbians and gay men in any way he can. Of course Reg does not support physical bashing. He's just content to do his bashing verbally which is probably more damaging to all of us in the long term than being physically assaulted. Reg is a major player in the organized effort by the religious zealots to thwart any gains we have made towards equality. Of course his concern is for his children, who he wants to protect. I'm not sure who would protect any of his children who might turn out to be gay.

Later in the hour Cecelia, a radical heterosexual who was formerly national president of R.E.A.L. Women, called in. Cecelia's approach is usually the scientific one. She can match my studies about the cause of homosexuality with her studies. Trying to explain that I don't need studies to know that I didn't wake up one day and decide to be gay because it's such an integral part of who I am and who I have always been fell on deaf ears. When I asked her how she knew she was heterosexual she couldn't really answer my query other than saying "I just know." Of course it's usually only us queers who have to wrestle with how we feel inside about our orientation. For most non-gay people it's taken for granted.

Reg and Cecelia were the only two callers who really wanted to push

us back into the closet, although many other callers showed a real lack of understanding of the complexities of human sexual orientation. It was clear that many of those callers have struggled with trying to comprehend our lives and have reached some degree of understanding and acceptance.

One elderly caller suggested she had no problem with "homos" and couldn't understand why other people did.

One elderly caller suggested she had no problem with "homos" and couldn't understand why other people did. I winced every time she used the word "homos" but the intent behind her use of that label didn't appear denigrating to me. It just indicated she didn't have much information and education about the

lives of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals.

Of course, many callers immediately took the discussion into the arena of sex. One woman complained about finding a horrible pornographic magazine at a camp-site and about the disgusting pornographic sites a friend showed her on the Internet. Now why is it that some people are so interested in the sex lives of other people? She could describe in detail the content of this pornographic magazine that portrayed things like anal and lesbian sex as well as the lurid content of the web sites. However, she was so disgusted she could only glance at the images for a few seconds. I suspect that those who can't have sex get off on imagining what others are doing in bed and then getting disgusted. Perhaps disgust is a substitute for those who can't have an orgasm.

Trying to explain that being gay or lesbian is not really about sex and that it probably comprises little more in our lives than in the lives of non-gay people is usually futile as they seem to see us only in sexual terms. Of course there is also this fascination about others' sex lives in our own community. Unfortunately, most of our sex lives are not as fascinating and real as others would like to believe. I certainly have enough trouble trying to imagine a sex life for me without having to focus on other people's sex lives.

The phrase "homosexual lifestyle" came up with more than one caller. However, none of them were able to describe this elusive lifestyle that so many non-gay people believe in and so few of us can comprehend. When I look around our community I see an incredible diversity in the style, or lack of it, that people live their lives. This holds true also for my non-gay friends and acquaintances.

A few things became obvious after listening to the callers. The first was that attitudes have definitely changed, although there is definitely room for substantial improvement. I came away from the hour-long discussion with the sense that many people have struggled with this issue and have reached some place where they no longer buy into all the myths and lies that permeate our culture. Unfortunately, many

indicated that most of their information about queer people came through the media and largely consisted of seeing pride marches in places like Toronto. What they recall from those views into our community was the drag queens and the nearly nude nubile young men and women dancing on the floats. Who can blame them, though, when the media's cameras seem to run out of film when the legions of professionals queers, parents of lesbians and gay men, religious groups, etc. pass by.

Another observation was how important it is to come out to those people in our lives. Those callers who were most supportive and knowledgeable about our lives were those who have family members and friends who are queer and open with them. Mary from Yorkton summed it up best when she talked about her lesbian daughter and how when she tells friends that her kid is queer those friends usually talk about family members they have who are also lesbian or gay. Our visibility is our greatest strength.

A few callers were even so bold as to suggest that our education system needs to talk much more openly about lesbian and gay issues. Their belief that talking about it wouldn't cause hordes of young kids to run out for their first queer experience was refreshing. Of course they're right, but those who control our education system don't appear to have the cahones to stand up to the radical heterosexuals and the religious zealots who want to keep our children locked up in a closet of ignorance and fear. Honesty is certainly not the best policy when it comes to talking to our youth about sexual orientation issues.

I still can't get through a call-in radio program without the facetious and vicious suggestion that AIDS has been brought to the human race by homosexuals. One caller wanted to inform listeners about how homosexuals caused AIDS in Africa, North America and around the world. I rarely get angry any more when I do open-line programs but this issue always gets me riled. But then the caller wasn't really interested in the facts about HIV and AIDS, he just wanted an opportunity to openly bash us.

I usually have to bear with at least one caller who wants to quote the Bible to me and suggest God is not happy with our lifestyle. I wasn't to be disappointed as the last caller went into his religious rant, but as the closing music for the program rose in the background I was able to let him know that my creator created me as a gay man.

If there's one impression left with me after doing the program, it's the need for education to clear away the trash that has been perpetrated on our society by those who want to control our lives. That education can best be done personally by our being open with people in our lives. Unfortu-

nately that's not possible for everyone as the lack of safety prevents people from being open. I'm also aware that the media isn't really interested in educating the public about queer issues. Their main interest is in sound bites and ratings. The education system is slowly changing and the topic is coming out of the closet slowly, usually because of a few brave educators who are willing to stand up for what is right.

We have to find ways to educate the general public about what it means to come to terms with our queer feelings and the struggle we go through to determine how we are going to live with those feelings in a less than hospitable environment. Our lives are complex issues and we must find ways to educate people about those complexities, our diversity and our right to be who we believe we must be.

EDITORIAL

I've decided that one of my next projects is going to be producing a documentary. The working title will be the *Radical Christian Agenda*. The idea comes from that gem produced by radical Christians called the *Gay Agenda*.

I don't think I'll have any trouble finding footage to use in it. There will be shots of the Rev. Fred Phelps and his flock picketing funerals of people who've died of AIDS or people like Matthew Shepard who have been killed in the name of homophobia. A great shot will be the posters carried by the picketers saying things like "God Hates Fags" or "AIDS - God's Cure For Fags".

I'll have no trouble finding interviews by radical Christian politicians or clergy where they spout off about how being gay is comparable to kleptomania or alcoholism or paedophilia. Then there will be the story of those individuals like the Atlanta Olympic bomber who is also believed to be the same person who bombed an Atlanta gay club and an abortion clinic. Of course they will have to find him first but if not there are other radical Christians who believe it's okay to kill doctors who perform abortions or lesbians and gay men.

I also want to form an organization to compile the real facts about gay people and gather together in one place the studies that confirm what we have always said about our lives. It's primary purpose will be to counter the material coming out of organizations like The Family Research Council in Washington, DC. who specialize in twisting statistics to meet their perverted purposes. I suspect they also make up statistics if they can't find the appropriate material to twist.

Some of those statistics are ludicrous at best and dangerous in the hands of the wrong people, like the killers of Matthew Shepard. Interestingly enough they almost always focus on sexual activity. Like how many gay men supposedly eat feces (67%-80%), how many different sex partners we have in a year (20 - 106), how many gay men engage in fisting (33%) and on and on and on. One would almost think those radical Christian fanatics were obsessed with sex.

Unfortunately these twisted statistics keep being used by people in various sittings. It's not unusual for me to be speaking to a group, often well educated groups, and to have someone stand up and throw one of those ludicrous statistics at me.

So my documentary and organization will be dedicated to countering the dangerous radical agenda that this group has: to turn everyone away from tolerance, decency and compassion so that we all become looney radicals like them wandering the streets waiting for the end of the world.

Anyone want to join me?

THEY JUST DON'T GET IT

by Gens Hellquist

The longer I work in the queer community the more I realize just how pervasive homophobia is. It's present, to varying degrees, in all areas of life and in all of us, no matter how out we may be as gay men and lesbians or how supportive we are as non-gay people. It has been part of the fabric of human existence every since humans began organizing themselves into groups, clans or tribes. It still has enormous power over our society and it's still killing people.

I watch in frustration as various groups or individuals stand up and declare themselves to be against homophobia and for equality for lesbians and gay men. It's not the declaration that frustrates me, it's the expectation that that simple declaration will make up for all the millennia of homophobia. It's going to take more than short declarations about homophobia to cleanse it from the very fabric of our society or at least reduce its power substantially. Most often, after the declaration is issued, people go back to life as usual with the expectation that they have somehow beaten back homophobia. If only it was that simple.

A recent example is the decision by Saskatoon's city council to make a grant of \$2,000 to the United Way to be distributed to organizations working to address the effects of homophobia. They also published another one of those statements declaring that homophobia was unacceptable and that they saw lesbians and gay men as full citizens in Saskatoon. (For the details of the story you can check out the *Prairie News* article in this issue.)

City council's largess was not because they suddenly felt the need to combat homophobia in the city but rather, it was an attempt to settle a four-year-old human rights complaint against them over the refusal of the 1994 council to declare Pride Week. As one of the complainants against the City, I don't believe council is serious about fighting homophobia and instead is more interested in getting rid of a nuisance that has been hanging around too long.

Perhaps if the settlement offer—and the city has made it clear that they are no longer willing to attempt a settlement through the Human Rights Commission—had been presented through the settlement process I might believe it was more serious that it appears. I'm left believing that the city isn't willing to sit down with queers and talk about the issues that affect the lives of so many people in this city. If they had decided to give the money to Gay & Lesbian Health Services, the main group in the city addressing homophobia issues and the group that sponsors the event that brought about the original

issue, then perhaps I might see it differently. I'm not sure which groups, outside of a few queer, or queer-related, groups would qualify for that money.

I found myself extremely frustrated after talking to one of the city councillors about this issue. I have known this councillor for over 20 years and have always found her to be very gay positive. But I was unable

to explain to her how the negative power that came as a result of council's refusal to recognize gay men and lesbians in 1994 could not be washed away by a mild declaration and a small amount of money. The fact that the issue was largely debated behind closed doors and didn't have the total support of the mayor and all councillors also negated much of any power the declaration may have had. Homophobia is too powerful to be affected by such simple actions. It's going to take more. The pain of that 1994 refusal will remain with people for many years. That councillor did agree to sit down with me in the new year to discuss ways the city could address homophobia.

I was also distressed by the decision of the SHRC to not take the complaint against the *Regina Leader Post* and Mr. Hugh Owens over an ad that was published in July of this year. Because the ad simply quoted a few verses of scripture the Commission declared that quoting the Bible couldn't be seen as discrimination. I found this decision quite infuriating. The Bible has been used for hundreds of years to justify homophobia and discrimination of all sorts, not to

*Homophobia will not be
eradicated by someone
saying that it's bad.*

mention numerous other unspeakable acts.

I don't buy that the ad was simply placed to illuminate the readers about the Bible. Perhaps if those verses had been those that talk about God's love for all creatures on earth it might have been that. However, the verses quoted are those that call for death for gay people and verses that have been used to bash lesbians and gay men for centuries. To suggest that somehow those verses were benign is to not have a clear concept of homophobia and how it works. Anyone reading that ad would clearly understand the intent. It isn't a large leap to recognize that the ad is calling for continued discrimination against queer people and a continuation of homophobia. But then freedom of religion has a much higher status in our society than the freedom from homophobia does.

I would question whether they would find verses taken out of context from other holy books to be as benign. Verses quoted from the Koran suggesting that women are second class citizens probably wouldn't be seen as acceptable. Verses from the Bible that have been used to justify keeping Africans in subservient positions probably wouldn't be permissible. But homophobia is still so strong that it must be subservient to organized religion.

Now I acknowledge that many religious bodies have begun to examine their positions about lesbians and gay men. Many of them have issued statements saying that queer people shouldn't be discriminated against and that is supposed to expunge all those years of homophobia. I don't think so. The Catholic Church has said that homophobia is bad and that gay men and lesbians should be accepted. However, that acceptance is based on them not acting on who they are. They can't understand homophobia when they make distinctions such as that. Other churches have declared themselves open to lesbians and gay men but don't try to be vocal in pointing out examples of homophobia or don't be too open about your life. Acceptance that is conditional is clearly homophobia.

Homophobia will not be eradicated by someone saying it's bad. It won't disappear by throwing \$2,000 at it. It will only cease when we all examine the power that we give it in our lives and confront it whenever and wherever it appears. I frequently have difficulty explaining how homophobia operates. However, I certainly know it when I feel it but I can't always explain how it works at such a core basic gut level.

I do know we must do more because people are still dying as a direct result of homophobia. And it isn't just people like Matthew Shepard who are getting brutally murdered. I'm aware of four young people who have killed themselves in Saskatoon this year because they were unable to cope with the homophobia they felt on such a constant basis. I've worked with many others who have made numerous attempts to kill themselves but somehow managed to find the courage and strength to carry on and live with the homophobia. Fortunately, they survived because they found support to assist them in coping with the hate and intolerance. Many others haven't been so lucky. *P*

I've just returned from church, an institution whose door step I haven't darkened in years. I've been in church halls for various meetings but I haven't sat through a service in a church sanctuary since my father died many years ago. Tonight my visit to St. Thomas Wesley United Church was to participate in the official opening of The Queer Project, an art display on gay bashing brought to Saskatoon by Peterborough artist Spencer J. Harrison.

St. Thomas Wesley United Church is one of the few churches in Saskatchewan and indeed Canada which has actively followed up on the United Church's declaration of acceptance of lesbians and gay men made over a decade ago. For the past number of years members of St Thomas Wesley have educated themselves, debated and dialogued with the queer community on their way to becoming an affirming congregation. An affirming congregation in the United Church is one which has studied and worked to learn about the realities of homophobia that queer people live with on a daily basis. They have done the real work to get to a place where they can truly say they welcome and embrace lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people.

Over the past number of years I have had the pleasure of speaking with members of the congregation at St. Thomas Wesley. I have watched them struggle with the homophobia they have encountered in their lives and in their journey to understanding.

For the past three years a committee of the church has worked to bring The Queer Project to Saskatoon and to find locations around town where they could display different pieces of the powerful art display. They appeared before city council where they received the same homophobic and disrespectful treatment from some councillors and the mayor that are known all too well to members of the local queer community who have appeared before council on other issues. They approached the police chief to see if they could hang one of the project panels in the police station and they encountered the rejection and indifference that is all too familiar to the queer community.

The affirming committee at St. Thomas Wesley, and to a lesser extent the whole congregation, have become activists against homophobia and advocates of the queer community. As far as I know, that committee is comprised of all heterosexuals, although numerous members of the congregation are queer.

In the past few years I've had the gratification of working with numerous non-gay people who are fighting for an end to homophobia in a wide range of areas. Occasionally their motivation comes from having gay or lesbian family members but usually they are involved because they know homophobia is wrong and

that it has a drastic negative impact on all of society and that it must end.

I sit on the Breaking The Silence conference organizing committee where the majority of members are not gay. Don Cochrane, an education professor at the University of Saskatchewan, has spearheaded the conference since its beginning in 1997. Don's energy and commitment for an end to homophobia and equality for all queer people rivals that of most lesbians and gay men. I am frequently in awe of his tireless efforts to build a community where queer people are treated with dignity and respect.

I work with Sharon Fyke, a non-gay guidance counsellor at Aden Bowman collegiate, on both the Breaking The Silence committee as well as Gay & Lesbian Health Services' Safe School Project. I have always admired Sharon's commitment to protecting those gay and lesbian students she works with, as well as all queer students in the education committee. She has been appointed to the Saskatoon Public School Division's committee examining ways to address homophobia in Saskatoon's public schools. We have also shared a few tears over young gay people who have killed themselves because they don't believe they can continue to live in a world that continually bashes them and treats them as pariahs.

For the past six or seven years it has been my joy to work with members of the local PFLAG group whose dedication to making a better world for their children, and all other children, has been incredible to watch. Under the leadership of Kay Williams and Myrna Rolfes they have taken it upon themselves to educate those in the Catholic school system about homophobia. Whenever support is needed for queer initiatives in Saskatoon they can be counted on to be in the front lines. They were an instrumental part of Gay & Lesbian Health Services receiving core funding from Saskatchewan Health.

These are only a few of the dozens of non-gay people that it has been my pleasure to meet and work with over the past few years. Their dedication to making the world a safer place for gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people is unparalleled. As the millennium closes it appears that we are seeing the emergence of a new breed of queer activists: heterosexuals. They have partnered with the queer community to work together for change. Their courage and dedication is a wonder to observe.

Each year at GLHS we conduct direct mail appeals for donations to help support the vital work we are doing to combat the effects of homophobia. We have two lists which we refer to as the queer list and the het list. The queer list is three times the size of the het

(Continues on next page...)

*As the ranks of queers activists
are being expanded by non-gay
people it also appears that there
is a growing complacency
within the queer community*

(Continued from previous page...)

list but usually we raise more money from the het list than we do from the queer list.

It's not only in Saskatoon that non-gay people have become active participants in the fight for an end to homophobia. I'm aware of individuals and groups in other cities across the prairies who have become part of the gay liberation movement. Individuals who are willing to put their time, energy and money on the line in efforts to build safer communities for all queer people.

As the ranks of queers activists are being expanded by non-gay people it also appears that there is a growing complacency within the queer community as the numbers of gays and lesbians actively participating in the fight for equality is certainly not keeping pace with those non-gay people taking up the fight.

As a new millennium nears and most of the major court battles for equality are successfully won and behind us, there appears to be a sentiment that the battle is over. It's time to sit back and relax. However, the time to hang up our activist caps is not yet here. Homophobia is still alive and strong and is not about to be easily banished with a few court victories. There are still many who wish to keep homophobia alive for their own purposes.

The women at St. Thomas Wesley are a prime example of how activism can work. Not everyone can, or perhaps should, be out on the streets and in the public eye advocating for equality but everyone can do work similar to that of those dedicated commit-

tee members at St. Thomas Wesley. For nearly three years they have met, worked and planned to bring The Queer Project to Saskatoon. They raised money through numerous means to pay the expenses associated with bringing the exhibit to Saskatoon. They met with numerous people and organizations in Saskatoon to encourage them to become involved by displaying various panels of the exhibit. Most of their work was done out of the public eye but that work has culminated in a display that can't help but strongly affect those that view it. Many of those people will find a way somehow to become involved in creating an equitable society where gay people are treated with the dignity and respect we deserve.

We need to extend our heartfelt appreciation to those non-gay partners in our fight for an end to the incredible destruction caused by homophobia. Their support and work has changed the face of queer activism and has broadened the coalition of people willing to stand up and say enough is enough.

We also need to remind ourselves that the fight for an end to homophobia is far from over. While many of our lives have been changed immeasurably for the better, those of us who are able to be out to varying degrees are still the lucky ones. The majority of members of our queer family are still locked away in their closets of fear and shame. There are still hundreds of queer people who kill themselves each year in Canada because they can't fathom living in a society poisoned by homophobia. There are still tens of thousands of people who resort to alcohol or drugs to numb the pain that homophobia causes in their lives. Homophobia still continues to have dire consequences on all our lives. [2]

It's a new year, a new decade, a new century and a new millennium. We certainly do feel the need to count things in our culture as if assigning a number, or label, to something adds significance. However, it is the thing to do in these times so it might be interesting to look back at what transpired over the past few decades and what lies ahead.

There have definitely been monumental changes occurring in North American culture regarding homosexuality and the conditions that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered—or queer folk—live with have changed considerably. However, in many ways things are not all that different.

The last 50 or so years of the past millennium saw the growth and increased visibility of a segment that previously had been hidden from polite society. More importantly it saw the labelling and politicization of a group of people and a bringing together of that group in a movement for social change.

Men sleeping with men and women sleeping with women has always existed. Women loving and committing to another woman and men building committed relationships with other men has always been a part of the natural order of life. Unfortunately, so too has one group trying to maintain their power and control over another group. The last half of the 20th Century saw a collision between those two elements.

In the past century two distinct movements to politicize the lives of homosexual men and women grew up. The first in Germany and central Europe was exterminated by the Nazis, the second is still with us. Both movements developed artificial models of appropriate behaviours for queers. Both were rebellions against those powers that controlled, or at least attempted to control, much of daily life. The modern lesbian and gay movement began to percolate beneath the surface after World War II and broke through that surface in 1969 as part of the broader movement for change in the social and power structures that governed society.

Our modern concepts of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered are in many ways unnatural concepts as well as political concepts that attempt to develop refuge from the ravages wrought upon us by organized religion and those who would be our rulers. As the church began to exert more influence on those who would be our rulers the oppression forced queers, along with numerous other marginalized groups, to become political. Concepts of what it means to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered came into existence, another example of our propensity to count or label things and/or people.

Don't get me wrong. I believe it was, and is, important to politicize some things which are ultimately extremely personal. Yes, the personal can also be the political. But sometimes I think we forget that the act of loving another person, of the same gender or not, is ultimately a natural act.

In our attempts to create a place where we can have some degree of safety to be who we are, we must be careful that those constructs we develop to find safety don't get in the way of some people achieving safety or leave them out of the collective fight for safety. As the last millennium ended we had developed rather strong models of what being queer was all about. Part of my fear about that model is lately it is starting to look all too much like the model that we rebelled against as the cry to be just like them becomes stronger, them being largely white, middle class and all too often male.

I'm involved with a group of eleven queer men, one queer woman and one heterosexual woman in looking at ways to address HIV/AIDS prevention issues. There is a recognition that HIV prevention messages aren't working for many queer men and a growing realization that those messages have to be delivered in the context of the many other issues that queer men face in our society. At our first meeting we had a long, and at times heated, discussion about whether we were going to deal with gay men, bisexual men, or MSMs, which is a clinical term devised to classify men who sleep with other men but don't label themselves gay or bisexual. Of course ultimately all of the classifications are for men who sleep with other men. The sentiment seemed to be that we could only address the needs of gay men. Of course, gay men don't have contact with bisexuals or MSMs.

Many men who sleep with other men, and often have lifelong committed relationships, don't feel comfortable attaching the label *bisexual* or *gay* to themselves because they see those labels as a political identity. They also fail to see themselves in those symbols of queerness that are most visible today.

Part of the problem is that we still don't live in a society that values people as individuals. It's important to be seen as part of a group, to fit a label, and to follow the rules attached to that group and/or label. It's no different in the queer communities. There is a lot of variation in the rules, although at times it seems as though the rules and definitions are getting tighter. There are times I question whether I can appropriately call myself gay. After all, I've never been to San Francisco, don't enjoy discos or gay bars, have no interest in fashion, don't work out at the gym, never been to the ballet, etc. etc. etc. However, I am a man who continues to have sex, and relationships, with men.

(Continues on next page...)

*Men sleeping with men
and women sleeping
with women has
always existed.*

(Continued from previous page...)

When I first got involved in the gay movement nearly 30 years ago, I thought my expectations were few and simple. All I wanted was a community of people who would support me for who I was. Getting laid more often was also part of the picture, as was finding a lover to share my life with. Looking back now I realize how huge those expectations really were because meeting them meant my life had to become political.

In those beginning days of gay lib our numbers were small and the need to stand together was crucial. We were an extremely diverse band of individuals who often didn't quite understand what made other members of our tribe tick but we knew it was us against the world. Today those diverse individuals are split off into a veritable smorgasbord of smaller groups whose lives rarely intersect with one another in a political sense, although we frequently have sex with one another. The need to stand together as a collection of tribes fighting to carve out safe environments in which to live no longer carries the same import.

Working in a community based queer organization has afforded me the opportunity to really see how diverse the groups of people who have sexual, and/or emotional, and/or spiritual relationships with others of the same gender really is. While we label our agency as being for gays and lesbians, we, in essence, work with a much broader spectrum of queer people. It has given me an opportunity to see many people who do not label themselves as gay, lesbian, or bi but still are struggling to find a safe environ-

ment where they can live out their life with that person(s) of the same gender with whom they are involved. I've come to realize the importance of standing with them regardless of whether they attach the right label to themselves or not.

Some of those people who don't label themselves as gay, bi or lesbian have become important parts of my life. When we share time together they are fascinated about the world I've constructed around myself and I'm as fascinated about the world they live in. Our worlds can be vastly different but we both realize that we enjoy having the other as a part of our life.

As we begin the new century, I hope we'll get better at broadening our vision and seeing the diversity of our community as well as recognizing that the need to support one another is still strong. We have gone through significant changes to our social order and the power structures that have a major influence in our lives. For some this has been liberating, but for many others that liberation is still not a large factor influencing their lives. Does it really matter whether someone chooses to label themselves gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered or chooses to not label themselves at all? Our needs for safe environments that enable us to explore who we are and work towards achieving our hopes and dreams is the same. We need to develop a more global and holistic way to look at our lives, our communities and our societies. To not do so denies many people the opportunity to achieve the equality we have fought so long for and sullies the safety we have developed around our lives. *[B]*

A SMORGASBORD OF SPONTANEOUS SEX

by Jeff Dodds

As I approach my birthday, or Labour Day as my mother likes to call it, I am finding myself pausing to think about all those years ago when I was but a confused young man trying to find my tribe. I have very vivid recollections of that moment when I first discovered that I was a gay boy, or "a faggot" as it was explained to me by my entire school, and realised that I might as well be on a deserted island for all the company I was going to have.

In an effort to understand more, I sought out a book in my local library entitled *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)*, and, believe me, this is one of those rare occasions when the movie is better than the book. Fearing that I was being observed by every set of eyes in the place, I quickly spirited the book and my trembling eleven-year-old self away into a corner of the library where I sat down to discover my future, according to a renowned physician and author.

The section on homosexuality was not lengthy, but it was concise. I was going to live an unhealthy, unhappy existence and likely die of alcoholism at an early age as a sad and tormented soul. I wouldn't have happy relationships, my family and friends would cast me aside and my sex life would be clandestine encounters, too brief to really enjoy, followed by crippling guilt. Moreover, the only place I was likely to find sexual partners was in public washrooms, more specifically, the washrooms of Greyhound Bus Depots.

Well, dear reader, you can imagine the dark cloud that descended over me after reading that drivel. More alarming to me was the fact that I already frequented the Bus Depot. It was one of the few places where I could play pinball, as my parents wouldn't allow me to go into pool halls. If only they knew what was going on in the bus depot. Coincidentally, the bus depot was only one block from the very library where I sat, likely with an expression of tortured horror etched across my face.

Well, as it turns out, the book was mostly right except that I'm not yet dead and I have found sex in places other than the bus depot.

Actually, I'm only kidding, but I really was convinced that I was destined to a life of gloom, and for that entire year I tried, albeit in vain, to entertain the thought of dating a member of the opposite sex and pine for a future not unlike the one lived by my parents. It was also the year that I stopped playing pinball.

It was in my twelfth year that a little ray of hope came into my life when I discovered gay porno magazines. Now, I'm not going to

claim that I didn't look at the pictures, but the fact is that much of the non-fiction content taught me that: a) there are others like me, and: b) they all live in New York and San Francisco (I did say it was a *little* ray of hope). I began to understand that there were gay people who had survived and gone on to live healthy and productive lives... in New York or San Francisco. The fiction taught me that sex is spontaneous, not limited to occurring only in bus depot

washrooms, and can even occur with straight men who will make miraculous conversions right before your eyes (or elsewhere on your body).

Armed with this new wealth of knowledge (however skewed, it was considerably better than the knowledge I had held previously), I set out to experience this smorgasbord of spontaneous sex. First, I tried the locker room, usually a place I dreaded because it was located

in a gymnasium, but I overcame the dread in order to enjoy fully the sexual potential that it provided. Forgetting entirely that I was in junior high school, I found myself surrounded by young men who made every effort to not even show their underwear off, let alone sweep me off my feet and carry me off into the showers. It was certainly a *form* of sexual tension, but not quite what I had hoped. Given that the locker room hadn't panned out quite as planned, I pursued other options.

First it was the news that we were getting cable television installed at home. Imagine my excitement. I felt it only appropriate to ask for the day off from school so that I could be at home to witness this exciting moment first hand, and of course make myself available to the cable installer should he require any assistance. It turned out that my parents didn't quite share my sense of gracious generosity toward the cable company. I found myself walking off to school the morning of his arrival, certain that my first exciting sexual encounter had been thwarted by my oppressive heterosexual parents.

Then it was my sudden addiction to pizza. We won't get into the number of times I begged my parents to order pizza, nor the number of times I insisted on answering the door, on those infrequent occasions when they relented to my whining. Rushing to the door to pay with eager anticipation, I still don't understand how my parents didn't conclude that I should be institutionalized. I would slowly open the door, secretly wishing I was only wearing a bathrobe that would fall open at the opportune time, slinking my body through the door frame in my best seductive pose, no doubt appearing more like a slow motion version of Jerry Lewis doing the rumba than a sultry vixen of homosexual lust. I was young then, remember, not that age has improved my seductive skills...

(Please see *Smorgasbord* on page 8)

*I have very vivid
recollections of that
moment when I first
discovered that I was a
gay boy.*

Smorgasbord *(continued from page 6)*

By the time I had exhausted all efforts with the locker room, the cable and phone company, the pizza delivery boys, the newspaper delivery boys, and other icons of gay porn, I came to the conclusion that all spontaneous gay sex must take place only in—you guessed it—New York and San Francisco. Seeing as I was twelve and living on the Canadian prairies, I didn't see this as very helpful.

Twenty four summers have passed since then (you have no idea how difficult that was to type out) and many experiences have taught me many lessons, but after all that, my life is okay. The spontaneous sex promised me didn't come to pass, but neither did the promise of skulking around bathrooms with a cocktail and no family or friends. I certainly don't live carefree without a worry in the world, but most of the challenges I face have nothing to do with the fact that I'm gay, it's just the crap that comes with living, and millions of others survive it daily with me. I've never been to New York or San Francisco and I don't feel the slightest need to go.

Just last week I was visiting Saskatoon and that's where many of these remembrances came from. The very issue of my sexuality, that caused so much anxiety and fear for years, isn't even an issue any more, and hasn't been for a very long time. Over four days in Saskatoon I found myself surrounded by family and friends. I bounced my baby niece on my knee and sat with my mother and brother and shared a dinner (no, it wasn't pizza). I sat in my church among a broad cross-section of people, most of whom know that I'm gay. I spent time with friends, some of whom are gay and lesbian, and some who just happen to be straight.

It was during one of these occasions, surrounded by people I really care about and enjoy being with, that I had the thought, "I wish I knew then what I know now." And in thinking that, I'm really glad that I didn't know everything I know now, because all the challenges I overcame to feel good about my sexuality, in a society that discouraged my visibility, has actually made me strong, determined and independent. To have known it all then would have taken away all of the excitement and adventure of the coming out process that evolves over the course of years and not in one single pronouncement. Sure it's been difficult at times, but the challenges never lasted very long, and as I sat among friends and family I realised that I'm happy, I'm ready to *celebrate* a birthday, and I'm gay. After all is said and done, and the reflections complete, the only thing that I wished I had known then, that I do know now, and the one thing that I wish all people who are struggling with their sexual orientation could know, is this: it does get better, it does get easier, and you will be okay. **P**

LOVE AND HATE

SURVIVING VALENTINE'S DAY

by Jeff Dodds

Well here it is, another Valentine's Day has passed and apparently Cupid was too busy to make it to my house in time. Oh yes, I was ready; I had cleared off the roof, checked the chimney for squirrels and had cookies and milk set out in the living room. The next morning my life was unchanged, the milk was starting to curdle, and the dogs had cookie crumbs stuck in their snouts. I'm beginning to believe that my love life has less of a relationship to St. Valentine and more of a resemblance to the massacre.

When I was in grade six I had already been out of the closet for a year, vaulted out by a school mate who had been a little shocked by my interest in the same sex. At this point in my life I was part of a popular clique within school and spent many Friday evenings at the homes of my friends, at what were loosely referred to as parties. Parents were always around and we usually just ate and listened to our favorite Bay City Rollers songs. On every slow song some dancing would break out among the dating set, when the boys would move across the room and connect with the girls and return, coupled, to the middle of that week's rec room. For me, this was always the most awkward time, for I would still find myself sitting on the boy's side of the room, quickly rushing to assume responsibility for the record player.

After several parties it became clear to me that I needed to address this imbalance in my social circle, so I set out to find a girlfriend. Her name was Denise, and like many girls of the seventies, she looked like a short, skinny, Farrah Fawcett with tiny breasts. I guess, to a trained eye, she would have been considered quite a catch, but my motives were different than my heterosexual male peers: I simply needed a dancing partner who happened to be a girl. Our first date, it turned out, was also our last. I offered to take her to a Saturday matinee at the Strand Theater where she waited for me to pick out a row to sit in, only so she could pick a separate row for herself. While not sophisticated in the ways of dating, I did have a sense that this was not going well.

And that's pretty much where it ended. For the balance of my school years I generally kept to myself, avoiding school dances and graduation ceremonies because I didn't have any interest in stringing along some girl whose expectations were likely different than mine. I also believe that this period of my life contributed to the social ineptitude that plagued me for years after my graduation from high school.

*My love life has less of
a relationship to St.
Valentine and more of
a resemblance to the
massacre.*

I really didn't start dating again until I was twenty. I was living alone for the first time, and eager to set out on this life of debauchery and endless sexual partners that I had heard so much about. It would take a year before I even found the gay community in the small Alberta city where I was living. The first party I was invited to was terrifying. Having not dated in about a decade, and certainly not with another man, I had no idea what to expect when I entered the apartment building that acted as a metaphor for my coming out into a new world.

It turned out that the party wasn't much different than the ones I had attended in the rec rooms of my youth. Granted, there were no parents around and no wood paneling, but there was visiting and music and refreshments. There were

about twenty men at this party, but only one that I found attractive. As my luck would have it, the soiree was a going-away party for the very same man, who was leaving that night. We did meet though and chatted briefly. His name was Larry and he was a cute blond boy with personality abound. If there was a party anywhere, Larry would have been in the middle of it.

Larry would phone me several weeks later, back in Alberta after having decided not to put down stakes in Vancouver. He wanted to know if I would like to join him and a bunch of friends for dinner that night. It was Saturday and I was scheduled to do my laundry, but I agreed to meet him there nonetheless. When I arrived I discovered only him, and that he didn't think that I would have come just to have dinner with him alone. He couldn't have been more wrong, and I couldn't have been more naive. I really thought we were just going for dinner, and held that belief until, hours later, I found myself pinned to the couch, with Larry's tongue boring into my ear.

But it wasn't destined to last very long. We had no idea what to do together unless one or both of us were naked. For weeks we dated and had a very torrid sexual relationship, but all the time before and after sex was a challenge to fill. We did go out for dinner frequently at a restaurant that had become our favourite (where the waiter, it turned out, was being slowly tormented by my "married" presence. The waiter and I would later date and stay together for four years), we would pick up pizza and sit in the car overlooking the city and eat, talk, laugh and occasionally make it into the back seat. Larry also liked to shock and would occasionally freak out the locals (and me) with a kiss in public. On one occasion, we found ourselves sitting in his car outside of Woolco

(Continues on next page...)

(Continued from previous page...)

waiting for a friend when, within seconds, he was on top of me necking, my seat fully reclined, and causing people outside of the car to flee in all directions as soon as they saw us.

Larry's charm was his gregarious nature, but, as I would later understand, it was also his shield from the pain he had suffered for being out about his sexuality. We dated for about a month and stayed friends for years until we went our separate ways. They say that your first love never leaves you, and it is true, but I have no regrets about how things turned out between us... we didn't really have a chance to succeed. Being young and being gay meant that we hadn't had any opportunity to really try relationships; we hadn't spent years dating by the time we met in our early twenties. We didn't have safe places to be ourselves unless in the privacy of our respective homes.

Larry and I would be great friends now, but ten years ago I got a call telling me that Larry had hanged himself in a mutual friend's shower in Vancouver, where he had fled from Seattle after his parents had tried to institutionalize him for being gay. The love of Larry's many friends could not overcome the lack of love from his own parents, and the pain that society had caused him.

Several relationships have come and gone since Larry and some of them have fond memories, and others, in the middle of the night, still cause me to bolt upright in bed screaming (I'm getting help for that). One past relationship haunts me almost daily for

the loss I still feel, and if I had the chance to go back and do things differently, and have the knowledge about relationships that I have now, I would still be going out with him. I would have overreacted less, behaved better, and loved less conditionally. The unknown challenge for everyone I now meet is that they instantly get compared to him; not a fair comparison.

For all of us who try to have relationships within a culture that condemns us for loving, the challenges can be overwhelming. For years I had a partner that my family never knew about. There was the terror of having the boyfriend answering the phone when your Mother might be calling, or the fear that someone you knew would see you with your boyfriend and automatically know that you're lovers. That climate of fear changes for many of us as we mature and become more comfortable with ourselves, but some of us never get there. It can be incredibly difficult to form relationships with others while living in an oppressive environment. Is it any wonder that so many of us have so many relationships that don't succeed?

Each Valentine's I remember Larry and I try not to get angry for all the barriers in our lives that have slowed our happiness, and, for others, caused them to take their own lives. I remain hopeful that one Valentine's day I will awake to a card — with Love from Bumpy — and know that everything will be alright. In the meantime, until things improve for us, be patient with your partner and cherish what is good about each other. And don't forget to let your friends know they are loved, even when it's not Valentine's Day. *P*

AFFIRMATIONS

by Toni Vere

Once upon a time there was a girl who lived life according to someone else's rules. Rules she didn't write. Rules she didn't believe in. Rules that held her like an animal caught in a trap. The day she chewed her leg off to set herself free was the beginning of what promised to be the rest of her life. Gawd it sux writing this from a third person point of view—or what ever person—it's good practice though, I guess.

Anyhow, I am pretty much an almost non-existent shadow of who I was. In hindsight, I can hardly believe how someone else's rules could even keep me a prisoner for 20 years, in light of the fact that I am an extremely free-spirited gal-about-town. If I was a different sort of person I could most likely do lots of dwelling, drinking, and drugs (oh my). I could do a whole lot of other self-defeating things that could screw up the next twenty years of my life but, you know, I'm a wee bit feisty these days and I refuse to let what was affect what is or will be.

I've always been a thinker, a stew-pot, a melancholy bay-bee you might say. Everything I've learned in this life I've learned the hard way. When I reflect on the things that shattered the shell of who I thought I was, I almost feel so overwhelmed with a sense of "YA" that I get all emotional and girly-girl like and big-ass elephant tears threaten to fall like rain on an otherwise sunny day. But the feelings that come over me are welcomed. They remind me of how sacred the place in my heart where I call home is. Peace is such a beautiful thing.

A very close friend once confided in me that she saw me as a caged animal. I remember those days. I spent so much time pacing and looking out of the window. I felt like I was searching. Always looking... but I never knew what I was looking for. Now I know. I was looking for me. The grip that held my soul was frightening. Breaking free was the most liberating, mind-blowing experience I've lived to date. Really.

When I was twelve I wrote my first song. We lived in a pissy small community in the middle of no where Alberta, fifty miles south of Edmonton. There was nothing to do except get into trouble. I'm so thankful that something pulled me into the basement to my piano. I've sorted out a lifetime of pains, hurts, and broken hearts, thanks to one moment in nineteen seventy something. Writing songs became a primary focus of my life. Writing songs kept me sane. I was never a very good songwriter but that never mattered. What mattered was that I had something I could call mine to hold on to. Something that I valued anchored me to life, to live. The songs were good enough to keep me going. Good enough to keep me trying. So through my twenty years in search of me I wrote

mediocre average songs. But once in awhile I'd write something that gave me that rush that said "YA, this is what I need to be doing in this life." Then there was that time in 1989 when Pam Tillis told me I was cool and she really "dug" my stuff. Moments like that made me keep writing, even though deep down inside I suspected that I mostly sucked at it.

The day of my re-birthday—April 1st, 2000—something changed. The camera came into focus and I could see me. For the first time in my life I could face the world with no shadows, no apologies, and no regrets. My soul was free.

*Tomorrow is always
whatever colour you
choose to dip your
brush in.*

So many things have happened in my life; every time it was like a smack upside the head. In hindsight, I think something blocking my view of life was finally dislodged from my brain. I remember throwing my guitar across the stage in Banff and then proceeding to hang it up for good—for ever—which turned out to be about twenty seven

months. After I experienced a crash course in "How to fall flat on your face and survive," I actually pulled my guitar out of the closet—along with a few other interesting details of my life—and started to write again. It's been like a dam whose flood gates have been opened. Just when I thought I had enough material for a small CD project, I discovered I had enough material worthy of placement on two CDs, or one very long CD, or a long demo, I guess, because I don't like none of that fancy mondo-produced-over-hyped-formula-to-die-for music; I'd rather just be me, even if I suck. At least then I can sincerely say, "Hey, here's my CD. It's nothing fancy, and I'm a pretty average writer, but at least I didn't try to cover it up with lots of really talented musicians and a producer who cost me a heap-o-thousands of dollars."

And whether or not what I write sucks is really up to interpretation. I'm just being the devil's advocate here by exploring the possibility that perhaps what I create does suck. So—yadda yadda yadda—I stop and I wonder... Why the hell do I write about this stuff? The fact is, it's more like I'm driven. I have a passion for expression. But really, what is the point? I think that for me it's an affirmation of how hard the road has been to get to "now." It reminds me of how precious life is and how drastically a life can change when you set your mind to it. Writing about things paints a road map from there to here, complete with raging rivers, torrential storms, and blinding blizzards (oh my). It shows me that today is only as written in stone as you allow it to be. Tomorrow is always whatever colour you choose to dip your brush in. *TV*

WHAT WILL THE NEIGHBOURS THINK?

by Gens Hellquist

I sometimes get in the habit of forgetting how far the queer community has advanced in our quest for equality and acceptance. I lose sight of the enormous strides we have made in just three decades. While homophobia still has an enormous hold on our society, there are times when I'm reminded that the world indeed has changed.

The recent awards ceremony held by Gay & Lesbian Health Services, where I work, clearly illustrated how much we are becoming an accepted part of the social fabric in our communities. At least a third of the people attending to participate in that celebration of the queer community were heterosexual. Saskatoon Mayor Jim Maddin attended, and I believe he cancelled another engagement to be there and participate. Madden has also judged drag competitions at our local queer club. Saskatoon's new police chief Russell Sabo also attended and brought his deputy chief with him. Three NDP MLAs attended, although one was being given an award for her contributions to creating a stronger queer community, and a board member from the district health board came with his wife.

Five years ago we couldn't get the mayor of that time to even say the words 'gay and lesbian' without going into convulsions and the police chief of that time was certainly no friend of the queer community, or any other community outside the business community. Things have indeed changed.

This year we made a conscious effort to go after non-queer people to attend our awards night and concert. It certainly helped that we were presenting an award to MLA Pat Atkinson. We also sent personal invitations to many people who aren't a normal part of our community and who normally we just assume wouldn't be interested. We thought maybe it was time we asked them instead of believing in advance that they weren't interested in supporting our community enough to pay the \$25 to attend. We still get caught in the trap of not believing we're important enough to ask for support and acceptance.

I see this all the time when I counsel people around coming out. The reaction all too often is that their families won't support them. They will be disowned. The sky will fall. Coming out to their family will be the end of that relationship or at least will drive an irreconcilable wedge between them. Frequently they come back to me surprised. They had finally screwed up their courage to let their family know who they are and it was a non-event. Their families were supportive and often indicated that they already knew. The same thing often occurs around employment. We can't let our boss or the people we work with know that we're queer as it will affect the working relationship we have. Often the only change that occurs when fellow workers learn about our sexual orientation is that they want to know if we've met their queer sibling or they want to hook us up with some nice

queer friend of theirs.

We get into the trap of disclosing our sexual orientation to people fearful of what the outcomes might be or expecting people to react negatively to us. That may be a reality in some places but I'm not sure it's true for many sectors of our society. I long ago discovered I can usually get the reaction I prefer by expecting people to react positively to what I have to say. It's the same way when our queer community is relating to the larger community. If we ask for support expecting to get it, then frequently we are successful.

Now I'm not so naïve to believe that everyone in our society is going to react positively to us, but I do believe the majority of people, if tested, will come around. There are those who still want to perpetuate homophobia and loudly attempt to accomplish that goal. Those are times when we need to boldly stand up to the homophobes and we also need to start asking our allies to stand with us and boldly confront them as well. I often still sense a reluctance on the part of many of our supporters to not speak out publicly in our support, even though we do have an increasing number of powerful allies who do not hesitate to march in our parades.

When my mother discovered I was gay more than thirty-five years ago her biggest concern seemed to be "what would the neighbours think?" She finally reached some level of acceptance around me being queer but could never handle the idea that I would go on television and announce to the world, and the neighbours, that I was gay. This seems to be an affliction that many people still suffer from. It appears at times that the support we receive is only skin deep and that many of those people who support us are reluctant to stand up and announce their support for fear of what others might think. Do they fear that if they speak up for queer people they will be assumed to also be queer?

This certainly seems to occur with politicians. We have been lobbying provincial politicians for the past three years for increased funding at GLHS to enable us to adequately meet the enormous demands being placed on us. In discussions with MLAs, cabinet ministers and the Premier himself, we always come away with the sense that they support us and understand the issues. However, we still have seen little increase in our funding levels, although we have watched other groups being added to the list of government funded agencies or groups that obtain substantial increases in their funding. The only explanation I can come up with for this incongruent behaviour is that they're worried about what the neighbours will think. And those neighbours all have the ability to vote for or against them. The charge of giving "taxpayers' money" to queers still seems to carry fear even though those accusations are levelled by a small handful of hateful people. It

(Please see *Neighbours* on page 8)


Neighbours *(continued from page 4)*

also ignores the fact that queers pay taxes.

This fear of what others will think also seems to happen in our education system. Taunts and bullying centred on derogative terms for gays, lesbians, queers, etc. are still common on the playground and in school corridors, but teachers and administrators seem reluctant to confront the bullying. At times I can't help but wonder if the fear of being labelled 'queer' doesn't stop people from confronting the taunts. "If I stand up and say something, perhaps they will assume that I, too, am queer."

What is strange about all this is that many of those people profess to believe that it's perfectly OK to be queer, as long as it's someone else and not them being perceived to be gay. One only needs to look at the numerous lawsuits filed by Tom Cruise against anyone who suggests that perhaps he is gay. "Not that there is anything wrong with that!"

I'm also aware that I am fortunate enough to be living in a larger urban area where visible support for my community is strongest. I know it's not as easy in smaller cities or rural areas, although I do question whether the same principle of expecting negative reactions operates. I suspect a big part of the problem is that the voices of the homophobes are heard more often in rural areas than the voices of queer people or those who support the queer community.

Homophobia still has enormous power in our society and I'm going to start insisting that those non-queer people I know stand up with me and for my tribe and publicly confront that homophobia. I'm going to start asking them more to actively participate in creating a society that values and accepts me and my tribe as a vital part of it. I'm also going to continue educating them about the consequences of not doing that and I will continue to invite them to our parties. 

ON AGING

by Bert Lang

I am old enough that when I see a penny on the sidewalk, I think it is worth picking up. But I am young enough that I can still bend over and get it. I am old enough that I need a little colour to fill in the gray at the temples, but young enough that I can still remember my original hair colour. For those of you who can't manage to remember the correct calculus formula to program into your calculator (young) or slide rules (old), I am forty-five. Ish. I look good for my age I'm told (mostly by older men trying to bed me) so don't be surprised if I tell you I'm younger if I meet you in the bar: say about forty-four.

But how did I get to forty-five-ish? Last time I looked, I was eighteen. Of course, on that basis, last time I looked I was pretending to be straight.

I remember LPs. (I remember when they cost \$4.99.) I owned a used VW Beetle, sort of a coming-of-age thing back then, and I remember a time before cable TV. (Or maybe I just heard about it.)

When I was eighteen or twenty-one or twenty-five I weighed 125 or 130 or 150 pounds. (If you really must, convert it to kg yourself. Divide by 2.2) I noticed forty-five- or sixty-year-olds with pot bellies and laughed at them. I would not allow that to happen to me. How could they let themselves go like that? I certainly didn't. If I don't eat supper, take a really good shit, and suck it in to the point I can't speak, I don't have one.

When I was eighteen, my Dad thought my music was barbaric. Elton John and Barry Manilow were makers of noise and would result in the destruction of civilization. Where was the melody and harmony of Glen Miller? He was wrong, of course, and I was right, just as I'm right now when I'm critical of techno-whatever. Well, at least I remember Dad's thoughts, so I keep my mouth shut.

I see a lot of gay men my age trying to attract the young and beautiful. Why shouldn't they? Their quarry is young and beautiful. Of course, it isn't going to happen, or at least not in any meaningful way. It might work in a gay romance novel or movie. It might work if the older man is incredibly good looking or incredibly rich. But for most of us who do not look like Rock Hudson or count our money like David Geffen, it just isn't going to work.

We all have certain preferences. How many of us have divorced siblings who have remarried exact replicas of what they tossed in the trash can? We are no different. We prefer blonds. Or red-heads. We are attracted to short men. Or tall ones. We like them dark and brooding or happy and laughing. The point is that we

keep going back to the same people. What we have to learn to do is let our desires age with us. Frankly, I don't want to learn rock climbing. I've already done sky diving, and whatever that dance is they do now, it looks like a trip to the chiropractor to me. (Don't even speak to me about skateboards.)


I don't feel any older than I did when I was eighteen. I want the same things (OK, men rather than women) and I am more concerned about RRSPs. But I'm not the same person. I know that when an eighteen-year-old sees me he sees exactly what I saw when I was eighteen and looked at someone who was forty-five (or forty-four—I look good for my age).

The crotch of my pants doesn't ride at my knees. I do not wear a tea pot warmer on my head, and if I'm moved to wear a baseball cap, it is to keep the sun out of my eyes, not off the back of my neck. (By the way, after you've spent all that money on streaks, why do you cover

them up with a golf hat at night?) I chuckle at some of these styles, but I also know that they are no sillier than bell bottoms or tie-dyes that I wore when I was that age. I used to wear wool pants and cotton socks. Now, I wear cotton pants and wool socks!

I am thrilled for the young men and women who are able to deal with their orientation at such a young age, and if I'm jealous of them it is not for their youth and beauty (*liar, liar, pants on fire*), but for the extra years they will enjoy. When I was thin(ner), and my natural hair colour covered all of my head, I was so busy pretending to be someone I wasn't that I was miserable. At least today's young ones, as they jump from bed to unfulfilling bed, are miserable for the right reasons. However, I'm also realistic enough to know that if I had come out at, say, twenty-one, in 1977 (or '78), I might not be here to tell the tale.

What is my point? (My mind wanders, not from advancing age, but from that last rum and coke.) Oh yes... If you want to find the same pair of boots under the bed every morning; if you want someone to come home to that you are pleased to see, or that is pleased to see you; if you want someone who might be able to retire close to the same time as you; if you want someone to share a bottle of antacids with, then look for someone your own age. He might have a bald spot. He probably doesn't wear 28" jeans. He might creak a bit in the morning. But guess what? So do you!

As for the twinks, oh peers of mine, the last laugh is surely ours. When we are busying ourselves shopping for walkers and wheelchairs, *they* will be us, wondering why the youth (whatever they are wearing then) are ignoring *them*. 

*Last time I looked, I was
eighteen. Of course, on
that basis, last time I
looked I was pretending
to be straight.*
